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THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

*The Second World War
and Indian Nationalism*

ARUN CHANDRA BHUYAN

MANAS

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To My Parents

**Late Nakul Chand Bhuyai
and
Late Kumudeswari Bhuyai**

Preface

This study traces the development of the Indian nationalist movement during the period of the Second World War. This period constitutes a watershed not only in the history of world politics, but also in that of the national liberation movements in Asia. In India, particularly, the war accelerated the growth of political consciousness, and national movement as independence became the central point of Indian politics. The Congress came forward with the Quit India demand which, with the arrest of the national leaders, was followed by a mass upheaval on a very wide scale.

The Government of India has recently opened all the official papers relating to the 1942 movement which I could consult at the National Archives. I have also had the opportunity to see the *Gandhi Papers* in the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, New Delhi and the *Nehru Papers* and the *Proceedings of All India Congress Committee* in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. The recent publication of some of the volumes of *The Transfer of Power 1942-7*, edited by Professor Nicholas Mansergh and E.W.R. Lumby (Assistant Editor) and published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, has greatly facilitated my work. Most of the material in this series has not been published before. It includes official and unofficial correspondence between the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy and the latter's correspondence with the British Prime Minister, Prime Ministers of British Dominions, Provincial Governors in India and Indian political leaders, the minutes of the War Cabinet and Governors' reports. I have also utilized a good number of memoirs, autobiographies, biographies and collections of letters, speeches and statements of the leading participants in the movement.

During the course of my research, I benefited immensely from the advice of Professor Bimal Prasad, Dean, School of

International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Without his help and guidance this study probably would not have seen the light of the day. I remain ever grateful to him.

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to Dr. M.S. Rajan, the then Director of the Indian School of International Studies (1968), who was largely responsible for providing me an opportunity to carry on this study. I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to the Government of Assam for granting me three and a half years' study leave to complete this research project.

For various reasons I am indebted to Dr. (Mrs.) Urmila Phadnis and Dr. Anirudha Gupta, Associate Professors, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Dr. Francis G. Hutchins, Assistant Professor, Harvard University, S.K. Jha, A.B. Sawant, A.H. Molla, Dr. G. Goswami, Dr. R.K. Perti, S. Ansari, Miss J. Barbarua, Miss A. Dutta and to a host of my friends who took lively interest in this work.

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Arun C. Bhuyan

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1

THE CONGRESS AND THE WAR ISSUE

THE outbreak of the Second World War in the first week of September 1939 was neither a sudden nor an unexpected event. Since 1936 the international situation had been fast deteriorating. It became alarming after the Munich crisis, and the Nazi annexation of Czechoslovakia made a war between Germany and Britain almost inevitable. Already the world was divided into two blocs, the Allied and the Axis powers. In spite of professing different ideological shibboleths, both the blocs were essentially imperialist and colonialist in character. It was mainly for imperialist gains—either for acquiring them or for preserving them—that they got involved in this world-wide conflagration.

Apparently, the Indian National Congress, the premier political organization in the country, was aware of these international developments. It also knew that, as in the First World War, Britain might entangle India in any future conflict. The Congress remembered the dividends received by India after active participation in the First World War. After the Jallianwalla Bagh and the Rowlatt Acts, it could scarcely ignore the fact that India's participation in the war hinged on the issue of her independence.

Enunciating India's peaceful intentions as well as expressing its unwillingness to participate in any war, the Congress had stated, as early as 1927, that India had no quarrel with its neighbours and she wanted to live at peace with them. The

Indian people had the right to decide whether to participate in any war. If the British Government tried to involve India in any warlike adventure, it would be the duty of the Indian people to resist it. The Congress was determined not to allow India to be exploited by Britain for its imperialist objectives.¹ Such a resolution was again passed in 1928.²

Soon after this the Congress became engrossed in the civil disobedience campaign which continued intermittently till 1934. It could, consequently, pay little attention to international problems. The same situation continued until Jawaharlal Nehru took over the Congress presidency at Lucknow in 1936 when the Congress started showing keen interest in international issues. The Congress policies on war and other international issues were mainly formulated by Nehru. It was largely due to him that the Congress developed a strong dislike for the aggressive intentions of the Fascist powers and veered round to support the causes of democracy and freedom as against the forces of Fascism, Nazism and imperialism.

The Lucknow Congress (April 1936) affirmed its conviction that lasting peace could only be established with the removal of the underlying causes of war and cessation of the domination and exploitation of one nation by another. Apprehending that in the event of such a war an attempt would inevitably be made to drag in and exploit India for the benefit of British imperialism, the Congress reiterated its determination to oppose Indian participation in any imperialist war.³ This became a recurring theme of all the Congress sessions till 1939.⁴

Striving to obtain its main objective, *i.e.*, India's independence, the Congress followed a dual policy during 1936-39. It openly condemned the warlike activities of Italy, Germany and

1. *Report of the Forty-Second Indian National Congress, Madras, 28-31 December 1927* (Madras, n. d.), pp. 4-11.
2. *Report of the Forty-Third Indian National Congress, 1928* (Calcutta, The Reception Committee, n.d.), p. 95.
3. *Report of the Forty-Ninth Session of the Indian National Congress, Lucknow, 1936* (Allahabad, The All India Congress Committee, 1936), pp. 44-7.
4. Bimla Prasad, *The Origins of Indian Foreign Policy* (Calcutta, 1960), pp. 138-43,

Japan and expressed strong sympathy and moral support towards the victims of Fascist aggression such as Abyssinia, Palestine, Spain, China and Czechoslovakia. At the same time, the Congress repeatedly declared that India would join in any war against Fascism and Nazism only if she herself became independent. The Congress put both the Fascist and the imperialist powers at the same level. Once imperialism, the root cause of conflict, was eliminated, Fascism would then automatically be defeated.

On 1 May 1939 the All India Congress Committee reaffirmed its determination to oppose all attempts to involve India or to use Indian resources in such a war without the consent of the Indian people.⁵ As war seemed imminent following the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, the Congress Working Committee warned in the second week of August 1939, that it would not welcome any imposition of war on India. It did not approve of the policy of sending Indian troops to Middle East and Far East. As a protest, it called upon the Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly to refrain from attending the next session. The Working Committee further advised the Congress ministries in the provinces not to co-operate with the Government's war-effort, and to remain prepared to lay down office, if the Congress policy led to this contingency.⁶

II

These pronouncements of the Congress, representing nationalist opinion and sentiments, made little impact on the authorities. Immediately after the British declaration of war, on 3 September 1939, the Viceroy declared war on India's behalf against the Axis powers. This was immediately followed by the promulgation of the Defence of India Ordinance which armed the Government with emergency powers of all kinds. Although constitutionally valid, the Viceroy's action came as a rude shock to nationalist India, taking place as it did at a time

5. *The Indian National Congress, 1939-10* (Allahabad, A.I.C.C., n.d.), pp. 10-1.

6. *Ibid.*

when, excluding the centre, the whole of British India (eleven provinces) was ruled by popular ministries.

On 5 September 1939, Gandhi met the Viceroy and expressed his moral sympathy towards the British.⁷ He, however, made it clear that it was merely his personal opinion and that an authoritative statement of the Congress attitude towards the war issue could come only from its Working Committee. That Committee met at Wardha from 8 to 15 September 1939, under the presidentship of Rajendra Prasad. Eager to form a joint front against the Government, the Congress President even invited M.A. Jinnah, the Muslim League leader, to participate in the discussion. Jinnah declined the invitation. In order to express its displeasure at the way the Government had deliberately ignored Indian opinion, the CWC, as a first step, decided to call upon the Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly to boycott the next session. Further, it reaffirmed that "the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them...", and that the Indian people would not permit their resources to be used for imperialist ends.

The Working Committee took cognisance of the official British and French stance that the war was aimed to end aggression and safeguard freedom and democracy. But in view of the consistent divergence between explicit ideals and underlying objectives, it demanded a clarification of the issues at the very beginning. If the war was to defend the *status quo*, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privileges, India could have nothing to do with it. But if Britain was really fighting for democracy, she must give up her imperial possessions and grant self-determination to India. A free democratic India would gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for mutual economic co-operation.

7. Gandhi told the Viceroy : "...I could not contemplate without being stirred to the very depth, the destruction of London which had hitherto been regarded as impregnable. And as I was picturing before him the Houses of Parliament and the Westminster Abbey and their possible destruction, I broke down. I have become disconsolate." N.N. Mitra, ed., *The Indian Annual Register* (Calcutta, n.d.), vol. 2, 1939, p. 379.

The Committee felt that conflict could not be resolved without liquidating imperialism. India was the crux of the problem, for she was not only the outstanding victim of modern imperialism but also a power whose vast resources could play a very important part in any scheme of world organization. The Committee, therefore, invited the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims were with regard to democracy, imperialism and the new order that was envisaged ; and also to specify how these were going to apply to India and be implemented in the present.⁸

The meaning of the statement was clear. In order to obtain India's support, Britain should immediately grant her independence. The All India Congress Committee, meeting on 9 and 10 October 1939, endorsed the statement of the Working Committee. Leaving sufficient margin for possible negotiations, it stated its disinclination to take any decision precipitately and without giving every opportunity for the war and peace aims of the British Government to be clarified with particular reference to India.⁹

Before replying to the Congress demand, the Viceroy thought it prudent to hold consultations with Indian leaders.¹⁰ The interviews that followed added some more weapons to his armoury. In his opening gambit, on 17 October 1939, the Viceroy made the familiar imperialist move of stressing the "marked differences of outlook, markedly different demands, and markedly different solutions for the (existing) problems" which the interviews had revealed. On the question of war aims, he said : "The experience of all history shows in these circumstances the unwisdom and the impracticability of precise definition at so early a stage as that which we have now reached." Echoing the British Prime Minister, he added that the British were not seeking from the war any material advantage for themselves. Their aim was to lay the foundation of a better international system which would ensure that war was not the inevitable lot of each succeeding generation.

8. *Congress and War Crisis* (Allahabad, The All India Congress Committee, n.d.), pp. 14-9.

9. *Ibid*, pp. 32-3.

10. He interviewed 52 people.

As regards the future status of India, the Viceroy stated that the British Government was still committed to the principle of Dominion Status. During the period of the war, however, the Act of 1935 provided the best possible instrument for carrying on the tasks of Indian administration. After the end of the war consultations would be held with representatives of different sections of the Indian people to find out a satisfactory solution of the Indian constitutional problem.¹¹

This statement disappointed the Congress. Gandhi was constrained to observe that while it had asked for bread, it had received a stone. The CWC directed the eight Congress Premiers to submit their resignations forthwith. The Congress was virtually committed to non-co-operation with the Government. The Congress members in the Central Legislature were forbidden to participate in the debates. Meanwhile, the Muslim League felt so happy at the exit of the Congress that it decided to observe 22 December 1939, as "a day of deliverance" and "thanksgiving" throughout India. The League's action marked a further deterioration in Hindu-Muslim relations.

Yet, the Congress did not want to go too far in its opposition to the Government. It had decided to follow the principle of non-embarrassment, and to withstand leftist pressures for precipitating the issue. Gandhi, to keep the party-members usefully occupied, appealed to them to take up the constructive programme more earnestly. He believed that only through this programme could unity and discipline be inculcated. According to him the four pillars of *Swaraj* were Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, *charkha* and prohibition.

The leftist parties, on the other hand, felt unhappy at this halting nature of the Congress leadership. Subhas Chandra Bose, the leader of the Forward Bloc, was particularly sceptical about the Gandhian tactics. He wanted concrete steps for starting a well-organized mass movement. The other two leftist parties, the Congress Socialist Party and the Communist Party, were also dissatisfied with the seeming vacillation of the Congress leadership.

11. *Statement issued by the Governor-General of India on 17 October 1939* (London, His Majesty's Office, 1939), cmd. 6121, p. 21.

Taking note of the attitude adopted by the leftist parties, the Government decided not to threaten the Congress right-wing leadership by taking any action against it. As the Governor of the United Provinces told the Viceroy: "Every endeavour must be made to retain the sympathy of the Congress right-wing, every allowance must be made for their position, and advantage should not be taken of speeches and actions to which they may be driven to some extent against their wishes."¹² It showed the Government's eagerness, for the time being, to strengthen the hands of Gandhi, who was following the policy of non-embarrassment in an honest way.

Gandhi's policy of going "so far and no further" led to a political deadlock in the country. During this time the Congress press and platform were voicing persistent demands for *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence. The Congress was no longer attached to the Dominion Status. It described the war as imperialist and immoral in which both the Allied and the Axis powers shared the ambition for colonial possessions. Subjugation of the masses would not end with the termination of hostilities. The Congress case was placed on a high moral plane. The world was told that India's political future was closely linked up with international issues. Accordingly the British Government was asked to pay the price of India's help in the prosecution of the war. As time went on that price was raised to a higher level.¹³ The eventual price, of course, was complete independence.

Meeting at Ramgarh for its annual Session in mid-March 1940, the Congress was finally forced by circumstances to resolve that some kind of civil disobedience movement would be launched at a proper time under Gandhi's leadership. The timing, strategy and nature of the movement would be determined by him.

Since Gandhi at that moment was not prepared to launch such a movement, the Congress resolution was really aimed at stealing the thunder from the leftists. The latter were quick to sense this. They immediately mounted pressure on

12. Home Political File No. 3/11/40. National Archives, New Delhi.

13. Home Political File No. 4/17/40. Intelligence Bureau's (Home Department) analysis on Congress attitude towards the war.

the Congress leadership with a view to compelling the party to start a movement as soon as possible.

As a true *satyagrahi*, Gandhi, however, felt convinced that he would resort to *satyagraha* only when it had become almost inevitable, and he was inspired by an inner urge to defy the authorities. Till then, he would negotiate with the authorities times without number, hoping to arrive at some possible compromise. Such was the logic of Gandhian strategy.

Impatient of Gandhi's hesitancy, the Communists thought that by prolonging he was spreading a defeatist mentality in the minds of Indians. Gandhism, they believed, had reached its last, and the most reactionary stage; it had become the most disruptive, retrogressive and anti-struggle force.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the Congress and the Muslim League were heading towards a deadlock. "While the Congress had never accepted the League as the sole representative body of the Muslims, the League treated the Congress as a Hindu organization. A significant advance towards the deadlock was made in 1940 when the League resolved to make the achievement of "Pakistan" its main political objective. The League declared¹⁵ :

...that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principle, viz., that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the north-western and eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute 'independent states' in which the constituent units should be autonomous and sovereign.

"Baffled" by this change, Gandhi was quick to declare that "he would never be a willing party to the vivisection of India."¹⁶ But the League meant business. In order to popu-

14. Home Political File No. 37/46/40.

15. Mitra, n. 7, vol. 1, 1940, pp. 311-4. The resolution was moved by Fazlul Haq and seconded by Choudhury Khaliquzzaman and many others.

16. M.K. Gandhi, "A Baffling Situation", *Harijan* (Ahmedabad), 6 April 1940.

larise the ideal of Pakistan, Muslims were exhorted to observe 19 April as the Muslim Independence Day.¹⁷

The British Government took note of this uncompromising attitude of the two major groups in Indian politics. In accordance with its old tradition, it put its accent on the protection of the interests of the minorities as well as on the preservation of the unity of India. L.S. Amery, the Secretary of State for India, told the House of Commons that Hindu-Muslim differences seriously hindered the search for a solution to India's constitutional problems. He believed: "India cannot be unitary...but she can still be a unity."¹⁸

The fact of the matter was that the Government had no interest in bringing about a solution. Differences and mutual rivalry among the Indian parties enabled it to indefinitely prolong the constitutional deadlock.¹⁹ By excluding both the major parties, the British could well afford to run the war machinery without undue botheration and interference from any quarter.

The embittered Hindu-Muslim relations made the whole atmosphere un conducive to a *satyagraha* movement. Gandhi almost decided to abandon the idea of a *satyagraha*¹⁹ :

If the British Government will not *suo motu* declare India a free country, having the right to determine her own status and constitution I am of the opinion that we should wait till the heat of the battle in the Allied countries subsides and the future is clearer than it is. We do not seek our Independence out of Britain's ruin. That is not the way of non-violence.

Gandhi now turned his full focus on the principle of non-violence. He even sent an appeal "To Every Briton" "to accept the method of non-violence instead of that of war for the adjustment of relations between nations". At the end, he appealed to both the sides to cease hostilities. Gandhi's insistence on the principle of non-violence soon led to a mini-revolt in the Congress party. Most of the Congress members accepted the doctrine of non-violence merely as a strategy or a policy. To Gandhi, non-violence was a creed, which he did not like to be

17. Mitra, n. 7, vol. 1, 1940, p. 62.

18. U.K., Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, series 5, vol. 364, session 1940, cols. 870-9.

19. M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 1 June 1940.

diluted for practical necessity. He also desired this principle to be included in the future state policy framework of independent India. But the organization as a whole could not make such a promise. Its leaders believed that adoption of non-violence as a state policy would jeopardize India's national security and defence. The Congress, as its president, Abul Kalam Azad, pointed out, was a political organization with a political objective, and not a body for organizing world peace. Azad, however, expressed regret that the issue of violence and non-violence had been raised at that particular moment. The CWC would have preferred to postpone the consideration of it, but for Gandhi's insistence that it should make its position clear, particularly after his appeal to the Britons.²⁰ The Congress had not thrown non-violence over-board so far as the struggle for independence was concerned, but it could not give an undertaking not to resort to violence in all circumstances after independence was secured. Gandhi had no option but to withdraw from the leadership of the Congress. His request to be absolved from the leadership was acceded to by the CWC. The Congress appreciated Gandhi's zeal and earnestness for the propagation of non-violence, but it decided not to go the whole hog in applying it in the international field.²¹ In time Gandhi appreciated the Congress position.²²

It is not possible for a large and popular organization like the Congress to be wholly non-violent for the simple reason that all its members cannot have attained the standard level of non-violence. But it is perfectly possible for some of its members who truly understand the implications of pure *ahimsa* and observe it as the law of their life...

Gandhi's exit relegated to the background the question of starting *satyagraha*. In order to exhibit its pragmatism, the Congress again decided to offer conditional support to the Government. The proposal was first mooted by C. Rajagopalachari. The CWC met at Delhi (3-7 July 1940). Referring to the grave situation threatening national security and defence,

20. Mitra, n. 7, vol. 2, 1940, p. 10.

21. Home Political File No. 18/7/40, Fortnightly report, U.P., July 1940.

22. M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 1 September 1940.

it declared that "...the acknowledgement by Great Britain of the complete Independence of India, on a future date (just after the war) would enable the Congress to throw in its full weight in the efforts for the effective organization of the defence of the country." As an interim measure, the Committee suggested that for the time being a provisional National Government should be constituted at the centre. And that Government must have the authority to command the confidence of all the elected elements in the central legislature. Along with this, that Government also should secure the closest co-operation of the Responsible governments in the provinces.²³

By offering conditional support, the Congress almost shelved for the time being its demand for *Purna Swaraj*. This was neither a unanimous nor a popular decision. The dissenters in the party gave a determined fight at the AICC session (27-28 July 1940) at Poona. The official resolution, however, was carried by 95 votes to 47.²⁴ Gandhi felt unhappy at the willingness of the Congress to climb onto the bandwagon of the world-wide conflagration.

Instead of accepting the "friendly offer and practical suggestion" made by the Congress for the "patriotic co-operation of all the people of India" in the war-effort, the Government announced its own August offer (8 August 1940). Instead of a national government, enlargement of the Viceroy's Executive Council was offered by absorbing "a certain number of representative Indians" and constituting a War Advisory Council with representatives from British India as well as from "Indian India." It was further promised that, after the conclusion of the war, "a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life" would devise the framework of a new constitution. The nationalist demand was conceded that India's future constitution should be framed by Indians without outside interference. Representatives of various parties were called upon to come to an agreement about "the form which the post-war representative body should take and the methods by which it should arrive at its conclusions and upon the

23. *Indian National Congress, March 1940 to September 1946* (Allahabad, All India Congress Committee, 1946), pp. 74-5.

24. Mitra, n. 7. vol. 2, 1940, pp. 193-4.

principles and outlines of the constitution itself.”²⁵ At the same time, however, the Viceroy assured the Muslim League and similar elements in India that no transfer of power from British to Indian hands would take place unless they were fully satisfied. “It goes without saying”, said the Viceroy, “that they [the British] could not contemplate transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of Government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India’s national life.” In the end, the Viceroy appealed to all the parties, communities and interests in India to co-operate with the Government in its war effort, thereby creating new bonds of union and understanding, and paving the way for the attainment by India of free and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth.²⁶

Jinnah, immediately interpreted the August offer as an official recognition of his “Pakistan” demand. In actual point of fact, the offer had accepted the Muslim League’s demand for a virtual veto on India’s constitutional advance. Naturally, the Congress felt unhappy, and deplored the offer. The offer also seemed to be an attempt to bring the nationalist elements back to the parliamentary forum, so that the country would be free from agitational politics at least during the period of the war.

The Congress saw in the August offer a rejection of its Poona proposal, and inferred that this was a “...proof of the British Government’s determination to continue to hold India by the sword...The desire of the Congress not to embarrass the British Government, at a time of peril for them, has been misunderstood and despised.”²⁷

III

Indeed, by spurning the Poona proposal the Government indirectly helped the Congress in regaining its vantage position

25. *Statement issued with the authority of His Majesty’s Government by the Governor General on August 8, 1940* (London, His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1940), cmd. 6219, p. 3.

26. *Ibid.* Also, R. Coupland, *The Indian Problem. Report on the Constitutional Problem in India. Part II* (New York, 1944), pp. 333-5.

27. *Indian National Congress Report*, n. 23, pp. 79-82. *

among the people. The Congress not only rejected the August offer, but also withdrew its own Poona offer. The argument, spelt out by Abul Kalam Azad, was simple : "Now that Britain has rejected all the offers made by the Congress we have only one thing left to do and that is to non-co-operate in every way with the war effort."²⁸ To regain its pre-Poona position, the Congress decided to recall Gandhi to lead the party. And in order to reassure him the AICC declared that the Congress was pledged to follow non-violence for the vindication of India's freedom. It added that the Congress firmly believed in the policy and practice of non-violence not only in the struggle for *Swaraj*, but also in so far as this might be possible of application in free India.²⁹

The Government was looking askance at the proceedings of the Congress. Without entering into a direct confrontation with it, the Government first issued, on 5 August 1940, an Ordinance imposing "a strong measure of control" over the volunteer organizations of all the parties. According to it : "The drilling with or without arms and the wearing of unofficial uniforms which bear a colourable resemblance to military or other official uniforms would be prohibited under the Defence of India Rules 58 and 59."³⁰ The Ordinance contained a concealed threat against all the parties in general and the Congress in particular. The Government was obviously ready to put off its velvet glove.

The Government had other reasons also for showing the iron fist to the Congress at this time. The refusal of the Congress and the Muslim League to participate in Government-organized Civic Guard had made the latter almost a force. Besides, the Congress refused to take part in the District War Committees. Nationalist opinion branded the participants in the Civic Guard and the War Committees "as a set of *Johukums*," and the formation of the committees as "another manoeuvre at divide and rule policy."³¹

For the time being, the Government thought it wise to wait and watch, postponing drastic and comprehensive action

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-4.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

30. Home Political File No. 74/3/40.

31. *Ibid.*

against the Congress until the right moment. Right then, Gandhi did not seem inclined to launch a mass civil disobedience movement for the following reasons :

- (1) Under the existing circumstances people had lost respect for moral and ethical values. An atmosphere conducive to *satyagraha* was non-existent.
- (2) Anti-British feeling was not sufficiently widespread. Economic benefits had made large sections of people economically and politically satisfied and well-contented.
- (3) The Congress might be deprived of the goodwill of world opinion. *Satyagraha* could succeed only by evoking world-wide sympathy in its favour. But at that time such sympathy would be with Great Britain.
- (4) The educated unemployed were already absorbed into different posts created as a result of the outbreak of the war. Many of them had joined the armed forces.
- (5) Businessmen, industrialists, farmers, and the labour, all were busy in improving their economic lot.
- (6) There was no emotional unity in the country. In the three Muslim League governed provinces—the Punjab, Sind and Bengal—*satyagrahs* might degenerate into a clash between the Hindus and the Muslims. Gandhi was much disturbed at the rising popularity of the Khaksars, a militant Muslim volunteer organization. He saw the possibility of a clash between the Muslim and the Hindu volunteers.
- (7) Under the direction and guidance of the Communists *satyagraha* might result in a class warfare between the Capitalists and the Communists.
- (8) Gandhi was suspicious about the motives of the leftist groups because of their disrespect towards the *charkha* and lack of interest in the constructive programme.³²

32. Home Political File No. 18/1/40, Fortnightly report, Bombay, January 1940. According to information reaching the Government of India, the Communists thought Nehru would press for a movement. Seeing his reluctance they denounced him for his "petty-bourgeois vacillations." According to another Communist source, Nehru actually wrote

Besides, the removal of the leftist leaders by the Government from the political scene had helped in considerably lessening the pressure for a mass civil disobedience movement. Gandhi was expecting some sort of "goading" from the side of the Government which would automatically prepare the ground for a moment. But at the movement, the Government had not yet resorted to repressive measures. It was more or less inactive. A native psychologically surcharged with an anti-British feeling could well respond to a mass movement. A wrong step or a wrong action on the part of the authorities could be converted into an issue of moral and ethical importance on the basis of which Gandhi could fight a psycho-political warfare against the authorities.

Taking all these factors into account, Gandhi wanted to postpone a mass civil disobedience movement for an indefinite period. But he also realized that he could not possibly stem for long the mounting pressure for such a movement. He also thought that the inactivity of the Congress had induced the Government to neglect the Congress and underestimate its importance. Such a restraint could not be prolonged except for self-destruction.³³ He also felt that the policy of non-embarrassment which the Congress was following at his instance was not paying much dividends. This lack of appreciation and understanding on the part of the Government ultimately led Gandhi to think in terms of doing something to keep the Congress organization alive as well as to give a mild jolt to the authorities, and in the process maintain the prestige of the Congress.

Gandhi was ready to launch a movement. But he limited it to selected individuals, and made opposition to all wars its central issue. In such a movement, Gandhi could justify the importance of non-violence and also propagate it as the only

to Gandhi to start the movement immediately—otherwise he would come out openly and denounce him. The same source said that under his leadership the provincial Congress Committee had already been converted into the *satyagraha* Committee in U.P. and was preparing the ground for a mass movement; *satyagraha* bulletins had appeared already and the Congress had a plan to establish two transmitters for propaganda work. Home Political File No. 3/18/40.

33 Home Political File No. 3/16/40,

means to bring about conciliation and peace among the warring nations. It would not be a movement against Great Britain or the Allied countries alone ; it would be a protest against all the war-mongering nations. A mass movement would only invite widespread repression and at the end it would become a direct confrontation between the authorities and the masses. Still committed to the principle of non-embarrassment, Gandhi was aware of the need for a new model and a new technique.

While Gandhi was racking his brains to formulate an anti-war protest movement that would not embarrass the Government, the latter distrusting the Congress, was getting ready to face a civil disobedience movement that would be more massive than the previous two Gandhian movements. A draft "Revolutionary Movement Ordinance" was prepared and circulated to all the Provincial Governments. According to it the Government would acquire the power

- (i) to arrest, detain and control suspected persons ;
- (ii) to control local authorities and educational institutions ;
- (iii) to confiscate money or other valuables used for the revolutionary movement ;
- (iv) to control cinematograph and dramatic performances and publications ;
- (v) to regulate means of transport ;
- (vi) to control the use of post, telegraph, telephone, wireless telegraphy or broadcasting ;
- (vii) to impose collective fines on inhabitants of turbulent areas ;
- (viii) to search places and persons.

People taking part in boycotting, mock-funerals, quasi-military organizations and sabotage activities or possessing proscribed documents would be adequately punished. There was also a provision for "the constitution of special courts with special powers, for dealing with refractory accused". The memorandum on Press control mentioned that "no adverse comment whether fair or not, will be allowed on any action taken by Government to put down the movement." Of course, there would not be complete black out of news on the movement, but press advisers would be appointed to guide the local newspaper editors. The press messages connected with atro-

cities committed by the police or military, reports on inflammatory or seditious speeches and comments—deliberately designed to exhibit the Government in an unfavourable light—would be suppressed.³⁴

The Ordinance, as it finally emerged, was a comprehensive document. It had eighty-eight clauses, with six chapters. Extensive emergency powers were provided. Some provincial Governors opposed the title of the Ordinance. They believed that it would create a misleading impression in the United States and would give a handle to Goebbels for anti-British propaganda. In view of this and in order to be more specific and precise, the Government changed the title to "Emergency Powers Ordinance, 1940."³⁵

Gandhi was still groping. He told the AICC delegates in Bombay : "There is no question of mass civil-disobedience. I am still searching for something. So far, I have not been able to find anything."³⁶ Finally he decided to start individual *satyagraha* on the issues of free speech and civil liberty. Declaring that the freedom of propagating non-violence as a substitute for war is most relevant when indecent savagery is being perpetrated by the warring nations", Gandhi invited all the conscientious objectors to take part in his *satyagraha*.

The *satyagraha* was intended to be a unique moral protest movement. Its style and technique were to be determined by Gandhi who was also to make the selection of the *satyagrahis*. Everything connected with the *satyagraha* would be done over-board ; no secrecy would be maintained ; and no mass-demonstrations would be permitted. The *satyagraha* would be more qualitative than quantitative, more representative than popular, more spiritual than political.³⁷

Lacking in mass enthusiasm and mass participation, the individual *satyagraha* movement failed to produce much of

34. Home Political File No. 3/19/40.

35. The Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, himself suggested the title of "Subversive Movement Ordinance" with a view to giving a subversive character to the Congress movement. But later, he agreed to the fact that "the first (revolutionary) snacks of the Bastilles, the second (Subversive) of Vine Street". Finally he agreed to this title, Home Political File No. 6/13/40.

36. Home Political File No. 3/16/40.

37. Mitra, n. 7, vol. 2, 1940, p. 27.

an impact on the country. Although over twenty thousand persons, including most of those holding positions of leadership in the Congress organization, courted arrest, it hardly created any excitement or unrest, except, to some extent, in the initial phase. According to a Government report, "in some area it was limping along, in others it was moribund and in others again it seemed to be dead."³⁸ Some Congress leaders left the party during this time.³⁹ Initiated by S. Satyamurti, the deputy leader of the Congress parliamentary party, and supported by such leaders as C. Rajagopalachari, Asaf Ali and Bhulabhai Desai a move was brewing in the Congress circles to bring the party back to the parliamentary path. However, Gandhi remained unimpressed. Going back to the parliamentary path, he thought, would produce demoralization and hamper subsequent struggles.⁴⁰

From the middle of 1941 onwards the Government, in spite of its apprehensions and suspicions, was considering the release of the individual *satyagrahis*. The growth of the jail population was causing administrative inconveniences to most of the provincial Governments. In Madras, for example, ordinary convicts were released to make room for the *satyagrahis*. Moreover, the feeding of such a large number of Government 'guests' was adding to the economic burden on the provincial Governments. Besides, the treatment meted out to the *satyagrahi* prisoners seemed to have provided the press in India, the United States and Great Britain with material for anti-Government propaganda. The Government also realized that the movement had remained merely symbolic in character, and had failed to make any deep inroads into its war efforts. The time was opportune for the Government "to show a sign of confidence in their ability to

38. Home Political File Nos. 18/10/41, 18/11/41 Fortnightly reports, U.P., October and November 1941 and File No. 4/8/41.

39. Dr. Satyapal, an ex-President of the Punjab Congress, resigned from the party because of his lack of faith in the negative approach of the Congress. Home Political File No. 3/6/41. K.M. Munshi, a prominent Congress member from Bombay, resigned from the party to form the Akhand Hindustan Front on 6 July 1941.

40. Home Political File No. 3/50/41, Also File No. G-4 (Part-1), AICC, Nehru Memorial Museum, New Delhi,

disregard the movement", and possibly gain some political advantage over its rival by showing a friendly gesture. For this display of strength and goodwill might induce those still sitting on the fence—Congressmen and others as well—to come to the Government's side. Also, this might act as an eye-opener to Gandhi and lead him to abandon the path finally.⁴¹

The newly-constituted Viceroy's Executive Council met on 14 November 1941, and decided that "the process of release would start at once and would be completed as soon as administrative requirements permitted." Owing to opposition from some provincial Governments and intervention by the Secretary of State, the final order was delayed upto 4 December 1941 when there were about 4,000 *satyagrahis* in jail.⁴² Within a few weeks the Government released all of them, including Jawaharlal Nehru and the Congress president, Abul Kalam Azad, who had been arrested on different grounds.⁴³

The war situation had meanwhile taken a serious turn, following Germany's attack on and swift advance into the Soviet Union in mid-1941. Japan was consolidating its position in the Far-East. Pearl Harbour was attacked on 7 December 1941, thereby bringing about complete U.S. participation in the war on the Allied side.

The CWC met at Bardoli (23-30 December 1941) to assess the changed situation, and reiterated that only a free and independent India could properly undertake the defence of the country on a national basis.⁴⁴ Gandhi characteristically refused to compromise on the issue of participation in the war. He followed the logic of his refusal and decided to quit the party leadership. The differences between Gandhi and other Congress leaders appeared to be centring once again round the question

41. Home Political File No. 3/36/41 and 3/6/42.

42. Home Political File No. 3/36/41.

43. Azad was arrested on 3 January 1941 on the charge of inciting people to start a mass movement at Allahabad. He was sentenced to eighteen months' simple imprisonment. Home Political File No. 18/1/41, Fortnightly report, U.P., January 1941. Nehru, arrested on 31 October 1940, was sentenced to four years' rigorous imprisonment on the charge of prejudicing recruitment, creating disaffection towards the Government, and undermining national confidence to hamper the war-effort. Home Political File No. 3/18/40.

44. *Indian National Congress Report*, n. 23, p. 19.

of non-violence. Abul Kalam Azad said : "The question before him [Gandhi] was whether we were prepared to take up the position that the Congress would not participate in the present war on the ground of non-violence alone. We found ourselves unable to go so far despite our utmost desire to do so." But Gandhi's closest adherents, Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel, J.B. Kriplani and Prafulla Ghosh, in a joint statement (3 January 1942), asserted that they had understood Gandhi's Bombay resolution in a different way from other Congress leaders.⁴⁵

Gandhi neither opposed nor criticized the Congress stand. He felt that by offering conditional support the Congress had not violated the principle of non-violence; rather, under compulsion, it had made "a small opening just with a view to shake hands with Britain."⁴⁶ His exit from the leadership did not cause any flutter in the party. It continued to function as before. Gandhi was only physically out. His spirit continued to prevail upon the organization.

Gandhi's withdrawal from the leadership naturally led to the cessation of individual *satyagraha*. The Government's

45. They believed "that it would be nothing short of a calamity for the Congress to abandon non-violence on any account. For by doing so we lose everything including what we have achieved for the last 20 years... Non-violence as the official policy of the Congress holds even to-day. The Working Committee resolution contemplates association in the present war in the remote contingency of the British Government making an offer acceptable to the Congress. If that happens we cannot, of course, remain in the Working Committee."

They also asked the members of the AICC to use independent judgment "irrespective of party loyalty" on this issue. They went as far as to say : "we feel that the Working Committee will welcome the rejection of its resolution if the AICC holds that the contemplated abandonment of non-violence is against the interests of the country and, therefore, the Congress principally on that ground should not participate in the war effort."

File No. P-1 (Part—2) 1942 AICC, Nehru Memorial Museum.

46. "The Bardoli resolution is not a copy of Poona. It is faultless. The Poona resolution was a mistake. At one time I decided to divide the House to find who is with me, but in view of the Congress atmosphere and comments about us, my non-violence advised me to ask you to support the resolution"—Gandhi in AICC meeting at Wardha (15 January 1942). Mitra, n. 7, vol. 1, 1942, p. 35.

unilateral cease fire *vis-a-vis* the Congress had enlivened many expectations and aspirations. The Congress, too, was now willing to reciprocate and shoulder the responsibilities of national defence.

The hopes were soon belied. There was not even a dim prospect of a change in British policy. The Government was not prepared to go any further. Sensing this, the Congress virtually despaired of reaching an understanding with the Government.⁴⁷ Leaving behind the path of *satyagraha*, the AICC decided (21 January 1942) to take up the constructive programme in right earnest by going "to the villages" where war conditions had created so many difficulties for the people. It also decided to open the door of the organization to all those who were interested in working for the two-fold programme of self-protection and self-sufficiency to meet the internal disorders that the war situation had caused.⁴⁸

IV

By the beginning of 1942 the dust raised by the individual *satyagraha* had almost settled down. However, black clouds had appeared on the eastern sky of India, containing war threats which were ominous and imminent. The political weather, which was showing sunshine for sometime, suddenly became inclement ; a political storm in the near future was forecast. The rapid decline in British fortunes in the East and South East Asia had intensified alarm and despondence and unnerved the people. The uneasiness that prevailed was being aggravated by the growing shortage of cereals, general suspension of business in some places and difficulties of getting essential supplies. The stories of evacuees and refugees from the Far East and of soldiers on leave, alarmist letters from Burma and Calcutta, the defeatist tone of the vernacular press all created an apathetic and fatalistic attitude towards the war.⁴⁹

47. File No. P—1 (Part 2) 1942, AICC, Nehru Memorial Museum.

48. File No G—16 (1942-46) AICC, Nehru Memorial Museum.

49. There were rumours that the Japanese used to treat the Indians well in Burma and Malaya. It was said that many Indian soldiers had deserted and joined the Japanese army. There was a feeling that any support to the British now would meet with brutal reprisals from the

In early April 1942, Japanese bombs started falling in the eastern coastal areas of India. They had hit Cocanada and Visakhapatnam ; at the latter place five people were killed and forty were injured. The immediate reaction to bombing was a large scale exodus of people from the port and town areas to the interior rural areas. In Visakhapatnam, the railway system was completely paralysed ; most of the Government officials, particularly the subordinates, fled away ; so did some policemen belonging to the special Emergency Force. The local Government admitted the fact that the air-protection of the area was inadequate. There were very few anti-aircraft guns. The whole civil defence machinery was in shambles. The military intelligence, above all, prophesied that an invasion in force by the Japanese was likely to take place within a few days somewhere on the east-coast of India at some point south of Masulipatam. The local Government immediately gave orders for evacuation. Government offices were shifted to various places like Ootacamund, Coimbatore, Vellore, Salem and Chittoor. Only the Governor, the Chief Secretary and some advisers stayed back at Fort St. George, Madras. By 14 April 1942, two lakhs of people had been evacuated. The Government prepared an Evacuation Scheme to give relief and comfort to the evacuees by establishing camps in different places. The ports of Madras and Visakhapatnam were closed down. Most of the people living in the coastal areas left for interior places. Many industrial towns, including Bombay, Ahmedabad and Sholapur, were greatly affected by this sudden migration of labour.

Soon the country faced a gigantic problem in the form of

Japanese afterwards. There was a rumour that the Japanese in the occupied Malayan territory were kind to the Indians and that a Nattu Rottai Chetty had been appointed by the Japanese as the High Commissioner there. Home Political File Nos. 18/1/42 and 18/2/42, Fortnightly reports, Madras, January and February 1942.

According to a Government intelligence report : "People had lost faith in the British war news. There were rumours that Japanese would attack simultaneously Chittagong, Calcutta and Madras. An imminent collapse of British power had been taken for granted. In Bengal, even some people started learning Japanese." Home Political File No. 18/2/42, Fortnightly report, Bengal, February 1942.

a sudden thrust of Indian evacuees from Burma, Malaya and Ceylon. From Ceylon alone over thirty-three thousand Indians emigrated (upto 21 April 1942).⁵⁰ The Indian evacuees coming from Burma and Malaya had a very hard time. The differential treatment received by the Indian evacuees at the hands of the British officials soon became a hot topic for discussion among nationalist leaders and the press. The exhibition of racial bias and prejudice by the British caused much ire and rancour in the Congress circles. Nehru described it as blatant racial discrimination : "...every effort is being made to find luxury quarters for Europeans and hardly any one except some private agencies care for Indian families who are adrift."⁵¹ The AICC, on 30 April 1942, adopted a strong resolution regarding recent happenings in Burma, notably in the city of Rangoon. The Government suppressed the resolution.⁵² Amery, the Secretary

50. Home Political File Nos. 18/2/42, 18/3/42 and 18/4/42, Fortnightly reports, Madras and Bombay, February, March and April 1942.

51. Mitra, n. 7, vol. 1, 1942, p. 58.

52. The AICC passed the following resolution unansmously :

"It (the AICC) noted with indignation the arrangements made for and the treatment accorded to avacuees and refugees from Malaya and Burma to India. The officials whose business and duty it was to protect the lives and interests of the people in their respective areas utterly failed to discharge that responsibility and, running away from their post of duty, sought safety for themselves, leaving the vast majority of the people wholly uncared and unprovided for. Such arrangements for evacuation as were made were meant principally for the European population and at every step racial discrimination was inevidence. Because of this and also because of the utter incompetence, callousness and selfishness of those in authority, vast numbers of Indians in Malaya and Bnrma have not only lost all they possessed but have also undergone unimaginable sufferings, many dying on the way, from lack of the necessities of life, from disease, or from attacks from anti-social elements.

"Racial discrimination was shown at the base camps in Burma where special arrangements were made for Europeans and Anglo-Burmans, while Indians were left almost uncared for ; in the matter of according of special facilities for transport and travel to the Europeans and Eurasians ; and in the general treatment given to Indians and non-Indians along the route and at various camps. In particular, this was in evidence in the scandal of a safer and more convenient route being practically reserved for non-Indians, while Indians were

of State for India, later stated that the banned resolution was based on "gross misrepresentation of facts or on unverified rumour."⁵³ The All India Muslim League also condemned the British officials for their "shameful discrimination" against Indian nationals.⁵⁴ The All India Women's Conference, criticizing the attitude of the Government, said : "...unaided by the Government, often obstructed by a most annoying red tape, starving, attacked by fevers and pestilence, harried by anti-social elements, these refugees have been reduced to the 'scum of the earth'."⁵⁵

The war also brought cataclysmic changes on the economic front, and accelerated the process of modernization in India. The economic infrastructure was considerably widened. But the sudden evacuation of people, particularly of the industrial labour from factory sites to interior rural areas, almost disrupted industrial production. The economy suffered a slump. Not only did the food prices go up everywhere, but disruption of the transportation of food-stuff from one place to another created a near-famine situation in many parts of the country. Confidence in the paper currency was on the wane, and businessmen were converting paper money into bullion ; they were even reluctant to hand over "Victoria rupees."⁵⁶ There was a general feeling of uncertainty and insecurity about the future.⁵⁷

forced to travel by a longer, more difficult and more dangerous route."

J.B. Kriplani, *Gandhi : His Life and Thought* (New Delhi, Government of India, 1970), p. 196.

53. UK, Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, series 5, vol. 379, session 1942, cols. 1388-90, Amery's Speech, 7 May 1942.

54. Home Political File No. 17/2/42.

55. Home Political File No. 18/8/42.

56. Home Political File Nos. 18/2/42 and 18/4/42, Fortnightly reports, Bihar, February and April 1942.

57. The possibility of the Government following the Denial policy and the Scorched Earth policy in the threatened areas caused much scare among the Indian business community. The Indian Merchants Chamber, Bombay, stressed that it would strike at the very root of India's economic structure, and made an earnest request that this policy should not be followed in this country. Home Political File No. 219/42.

Gandhi described the Scorched Earth policy as "ruinous, suicidal

The Chinese and the Americans were also getting concerned at nationalist India's reluctance to fight the war. They felt that without popular participation, it would be difficult to mobilize the masses behind the war machine. Though unwillingly, the Government of India had to extend an invitation to Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang Kai-shek as they had expressed their keenness to visit India. The Government particularly disliked the Chinese leader's eagerness to meet Gandhi and Nehru. Reacting with characteristic sharpness, Churchill wrote to the Viceroy that Chiang had proposed himself and would be an honoured guest ; but he had no right to intervene between the Government of the King-Emperor and any of King's subjects. It would be a disastrous prospect to have Gandhi and Nehru on one side and the Viceroy of India on the other, with Chiang-Kai-shek arbitrating between them.⁵⁸ It was decided that other leaders like Jinnah and Ambedkar would be thrust upon him in an attempt to minimize the importance of the Congress.

It seemed, however, that the visitors were inclined to accept the Congress as the only important nationalist force. In a meeting with Jinnah, the Chinese leader told him that he could not understand "why nine crores of Muslims require a separate state." In China ten crores of Muslims were living most peacefully with other communities.⁵⁹ The Viceroy also highlighted the differences between the Congress and the Muslim League and stressed the fact that the objective of the Government was to

and unnecessary". M.K. Gandhi, "Implications of Withdrawal", *Harijan*, 24 May 1942.

Earlier, Gandhi had said : "...are we able to contemplate with equanimity, or feel the glow of bravery and sacrifice at the prospect of India's earth being scorched and everything destroyed in order that the enemy's march may be hampered ? I see neither bravery nor sacrifice in destroying life or property for offence or defence." He asked the Government of India that at least for national and humanitarian considerations this policy should not be carried out. M.K. Gandhi, "Scorched Earth", *Harijan*, 22 March 1942.

58. Churchill to Linlithgow, 6 February 1942, Nicholas Mansergh, ed., *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47, Vol. I, The Cripps Mission, January-April 1942* (London, 1970), p. 121.

59. Home Political File No. 18/2/42, Fortnightly report, Bengal, February 1942.

harmonise these so far as possible. Making his own assessment of the situation, Chiang-Kai-shek concluded his visit by advising the British Government "as speedily as possible to give them (Indians) real political power."⁶⁰

The Marshal's pronouncement was in consonance with the American policy-objective at that time. On his return to China, Chiang-Kai-shek also conveyed the impressions of his visit to President Roosevelt and wrote that if the British Government did not fundamentally change its policy towards India, it would amount to inviting the Japanese to occupy India. He felt both worried and alarmed at this prospect. He even suspected that in British circles there was neither a feeling of immediate danger nor a determined spirit to fight.⁶¹ President Roosevelt, too, felt that Indians would co-operate better with the British if they were assured of independence, at least after the war.⁶²

V

Roosevelt's interest in the Indian problem was not entirely fruitless. The indirect American pressure combined with the sound of booming guns in the neighbourhood of Assam frontier to elicit from Churchill a demonstration of his 'sincere' anxiety to settle the Indian question on reasonable terms.⁶³

60 According to information reaching the Government, at a meeting in Calcutta between Chiang-Kai-shek on one side and Gandhi and Nehru on the other, a plan for the formation of a Federation of eastern countries, viz, Japan, China, Burma and India was discussed. The Marshal expressed unwillingness to form such an alliance with the Japanese. "It is reported that he (Marshal) disapproved of making any appeal to Britain to give more power to the Indians as he considered this would be a discourteous act. It was, then, under persuasion of Nehru that the final message was agreed upon in words approved by Nehru". Home Political File No. 219/42.

61. Chiang-Kai-shek to Roosevelt, 24 February 1942, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Vol. I, The British Commonwealth* (Washington, 1960), pp. 605-6.

62. *Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York, 1948), p. 1482.

63. Churchill in a message to the Viceroy on 10 March 1942, said :
"It would be impossible, owing to unfortunate rumours and publicity, and the general American outlook to stand on a purely negative

Besides, some members of the British Cabinet also realised the need to do something to satisfy the Indian nationalist opinion.⁶⁴

On 11 March 1942, Churchill announced that Stafford Cripps, a member of the British War Cabinet, would visit India on an official mission, and carry the British Government's Draft Declaration containing proposals to settle the Indian question. Cripps had already proved his worth as an astute diplomat and a successful negotiator (Recently he had negotiated an alliance with Soviet Russia). He possessed the added advantage of having good contacts with some Congress leaders, notably Nehru. It was natural that both the sides should expect the Mission to succeed.

Cripps arrived in New Delhi on 23 March 1942, and immediately commenced serious conversations with Indian leaders. He kept the proposals secret for a week and published them on 30 March 1942.⁶⁵ The proposals had been drafted with a view to satisfying the three major elements in Indian politics, *viz.*, the Congress, the Muslim League and the princes. In order to satisfy the Congress, they offered, after the end of the war, Dominion Status, a Constituent Assembly and the right of secession from the Commonwealth. The Muslim League obtained freedom for the provinces to accede or not to accede to the future Indian Union. The princes also got the free option to join the Union or to remain outside by forming a new union of Indian states.

The proposals failed to enthuse the Congress. It found them vague and circumscribed in various ways. Nor could it

attitude and the Cripps Mission is indispensable to prove our honesty of purpose and to gain time for necessary consultations." Mansergh, n. 58, p. 395.

64. Clement Attlee, the Deputy Prime Minister, was particularly feeling dissatisfied with the Government of India's "sitting tight" and "a hand to mouth" policy. In a memorandum to the War Cabinet, he suggested (2 February 1942) the adoption of either of the following course of action :

"(a) To entrust some person of high standing either already in India or sent out from here with wide powers to negotiate a settlement in India ; or

(b) To bring representative Indians over here to discuss with us a settlement".

Ibid., pp. 110-12.

65. For Draft Declaration see *ibid.*, pp. 337-40.

view with equanimity the prospect of the Balkanization of India. The main hurdle in the acceptance of the proposals, however, proved to be the defence issue. For the Congress was prepared to set aside its objections regarding the future, provided it could be assured of a satisfactory solution regarding the immediate present. In this context the arrangement for organizing national defence assumed great importance, especially since in a war situation almost everything else would, directly or indirectly, be subsumed under defence. This argument flowed from the stand the Congress had consistently taken that India's defence could be properly organized only under nationalist leadership. The British thinking on this issue was nowhere near satisfying the Congress.

In his very first press interview Cripps made it clear that the defence portfolio would not be transferred to Indian hands even if all the Indian leaders made a united demand for it.⁶⁶ Later, Cripps produced a formula according to which the British Commander-in-Chief would retain his seat in the Viceroy's Executive Council as War member and thereby also retain full control over all the war operations. An Indian Member of the Executive Council would be in charge of defence and would deal with public relations, demobilization and post-war reconstruction, petroleum, representation on the Eastern Group Supply Council, amenities for troops, canteen organization and certain non-technical educational institutions, stationery, printing and forms for the army and social arrangements for all Foreign Missions and officers, also Denial policy—evacuation of threatened areas, signals co-ordination and economic welfare.⁶⁷ The Congress did not like the elaborate list of the functions of the defence member. Nehru and Azad with caustic pithiness, said that the list was "a revealing one."⁶⁸

66. Proceedings of a Press Conference held by Cripps on 29 March 1942. *Ibid.*, pp. 537-51.

67. Linthgow to Amery, 6 April 1942. *Ibid.*, p. 667.

68. Brailsford commented on this list: "What enemy of England and India drafted this list? Or is there at Head Quarters in New Delhi a reckless satirist? But perhaps we should admire the patient industry which scrapped up these odds and ends. Petroleum, Canteens and Stationery, but why not red tape and pipe-clay?" Henry Noel Brailsford, *Subject India* (New York, 1943), pp. 71-2.

The Congress Working Committee decided, on 7 April 1942, to reject this formula. But Roosevelt's personal representative in India, Colonel Louis Johnson, advised the Congress president not to publish the rejection. After meeting Cripps and the Congress leaders, Johnson formulated what came to be known as Cripps-Johnson formula, according to which the defence department would be placed in charge of a representative Indian with all the functions, excluding those exercised by the Commander-in-Chief as War member of the Executive Council.⁶⁹ There was no substantial difference between the old and the new formulas. Even so the Viceroy was not happy at the new formula, and felt that it would cause severe erosion of his power.

While the negotiations regarding the defence portfolio were still proceeding, another, even more serious, issue cropped up. From the very beginning, the Congress had assumed that the newly constituted Executive Council would function like a Cabinet and its relation with the Viceroy would be the same as that of the Cabinet with the Crown in the United Kingdom. It was reported that Cripps had assured Abul Kalam Azad (25 March 1942) that it would be a cabinet form of Government.⁷⁰ Cripps was thereupon reminded from London that this was not a correct interpretation of the British position. The Secretary of State for India wrote to him that the constitutional position of the Viceroy's Council could not be altered in the existing situation. The Viceroy-in-Council should act as a collective body. It should be responsible to the Secretary of State and subject to the Viceroy's special powers and duties. The Secretary of State also felt uneasy at the loose use of the term Cabinet by Cripps.⁷¹ He even insisted that the three European members must be retained in the Executive Council; and that the Home portfolio should not be given to an Indian for, that would disturb communal harmony and adversely affect the secret services.⁷² Later, Cripps denied having

69. Cripps to Churchill, 10 April 1942, Mansergh, n. 58, pp. 713-4.

70. Cripps' interview with Maulana Azad and Asaf Ali, 25 March 1942. *Ibid.*, p. 479.

71. Amery to Cripps, 6, April 1942. *Ibid.*, pp. 663-4.

72. Amery to Linlithgow, 7 April 1941. *Ibid.*, p. 690.

assured the Congress leaders that there would be Cabinet form of Government.

Resenting this *volte-face*, the Congress refused to continue further negotiations. Cripps treated this as a rejection of the proposals brought by him, and left India on 12 April 1942. When the news of failure of the Cripps Mission reached Washington, Roosevelt made a last-ditch attempt to salvage it. He wrote to Churchill : "I hope most earnestly that you may be able to postpone the departure from India of Cripps until one more effort has finally been made to prevent breakdown of the negotiations."⁷³ The cable came too late. Cripps had already left India. His Mission had failed.

The failure of the Cripps Mission lay in the serious constraints within which Cripps was forced to operate. While he was exploring various possibilities and sensing his way toward a possible settlement by holding out promises which appeared to him necessary as he carried on negotiations with the Indian leaders, he was obliged by the combined pressure of the Viceroy, the Secretary of State for India and the Prime Minister to adhere faithfully to the text of the Draft Declaration. Much to his discomfiture, Cripps realized that the Viceroy and the British Cabinet were equally hostile to Indian control over defence and to the functioning of the Viceroy's Executive Council as a Cabinet.⁷⁴ As Johnson, Roosevelt's representative in India, observed later : "...neither Churchill, the Viceroy nor Wavell desired that the Cripps Mission be a success and that in fact they were determined that it should not be."⁷⁵ Roosevelt himself thought that the British were not prepared to transfer power⁷⁶ :

The feeling is almost universally held that the deadlock has been caused by the unwillingness of the British

73. President Roosevelt to Churchill, 12 April 1942. *Ibid* , p. 759.

74. Amery, in a communication to Linlithgow, said : "It is clear from the telegrams that bearings between you and Cripps must have been getting pretty heated during the last few days, and indeed they were getting pretty heated between him and the cabinet.... "What a relief now it is over." Amery further added, "You have escaped being saddled with a probably quite unworkable team." Amery to Linlithgow, 11 April 1942. *Ibid.*, pp. 756-7.

75. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, n. 61, p. 661.

76. Roosevelt to Hopkins, 12 April 1942, Mansergh, n. 58, p. 759,

Government to concede to the Indians the right of self-Government, notwithstanding the willingness of the Indians to entrust technical, military and naval defence control to the competent British authorities. American public opinion cannot understand why, if the British Government is willing to permit the component parts of India to secede from the British Empire after the war, it is not willing to permit them to enjoy what is tantamount to self-government during the war.

Clearly disappointed with the British attitude, Roosevelt could do little beyond expressing such sentiments. His representative in India did try to have a hand in the negotiations. He was welcomed by Cripps; but not by Linlithgow, Amery and Churchill. Linlithgow made no secret of his dislike of Johnson's "dabbling in the constitutional affairs": "I do not altogether like the principle of anybody in his position concerning himself too closely with detailed negotiations between His Majesty's Government and Indian politicians."⁷⁷ The War Cabinet described the attempted intervention as "unfortunate."⁷⁸ Churchill told Cripps that Roosevelt was entirely opposed to anything like intervention or mediation⁷⁹; and mildly rebuked him for over-stepping his terms of reference⁸⁰:

We feel that in your natural desire to reach a settlement with Congress you may be drawn into positions far different from any the Cabinet and Ministers of Cabinet rank approved before you set forth . . . *It was certainly agreed between us all that there were not to be negotiations but that you were to try to gain acceptance with possibly minor variations or elaborations of our great offer which*

77. Linlithgow to Amery, 7, April 1942. *Ibid.*, pp. 690-3.

78. Minutes of the War Cabinet, 9 April 1942. *Ibid.*, p. 706.

79. Churchill to Cripps, 9 April 1942. *Ibid.*, p. 704.

80. Churchill to Cripps, 10 April 1942. *Ibid.*, pp. 721-2. Emphasis added. Colonel Johnson, in his report to the Secretary of State, wrote on 11 April 1942: "Cripps is sincere, . . . He and Nehru could solve it in 5 minutes if Cripps had any freedom or authority. To my amazement when satisfactory solution seemed certain, . . . Cripps with embarrassment told me that he could not change original Draft Declaration with Churchill's approval . . . Cripps' original offer contained little more than the unkept promise of the First World War." *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, n. 61, p. 631.

has made so powerful impression . . . here and throughout the United States.

On the eve of his departure from India, Cripps assured Churchill "that despite failure the atmosphere has improved quite differently, and added⁸¹: We have done our best under the circumstances that exist here and I do not think you need worry about my visit having worsened the situation from the point of view of morale or public feeling. In the last few days the temper has I think been better.

This had no relation to reality. Quite definitely, the situation in India, from the British point of view, was now worse than it was before the arrival of Cripps. His earlier pronouncements had generated great hopes. His failure generated greater disappointment and frustration. As the official Congress historian has recorded⁸²:

The reaction to the failure of Cripps Mission was so sweeping in range and so piercing in intensity that people began to doubt whether *poor* Cripps was the victim of a stab in the back by the British Government or whether *crafty* Cripps was the willing agent of a policy of 'Machiavellian dissimulation, profound hypocrisy and perfidy that knew no touch of remorse,' as De Quency would say.

The most significant impact of this fiasco was on the mind of Gandhi. Hitherto a believer in the doctrine of non embarrassment *vis-a-vis* the British during the period of the war, he began to feel his way, in utter disregard of the susceptibilities of the British, toward the Quit India demand.

81. Cripps to Churchill, 11 April 1942, Mansergh, n. 58, p. 740.

82. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress, 1935—47*, Vol. 2 (New Delhi, 1969), p. 332.

2

THE QUIT INDIA DEMAND AND THE BRITISH REACTION

THE failure of the Cripps Mission caused little embarrassment to the British Government. Indeed, such an outcome was neither unexpected nor unwelcome.¹ In fact, the war situation in South East Asia caused greater discomfiture and embarrassment to the British, because of their repeated defeats at the hands of the Japanese. The myth of British supremacy had already been exploded by the irresistible Japanese forces. A Japanese invasion of India was on the cards. Moreover, Indian loyalty towards the British had been adversely affected by the news about the formation of the Indian National Army. Besides, the sudden thrust of the multi-national Allied troops into the Indian countryside imme-

1. After the withdrawal of the War Cabinet's proposals, L.S. Amery, the Secretary of State for India, observed in his political note on the Indian situation : "The sending of the Cripps Mission was in no sense a sudden deathbed repentance involving a complete change of policy. Full Dominion Status, as defined by the Statute of Westminster, had already been promised as the goal by the Viceroy at the beginning of 1940. The August 1940 Declaration not only confirmed this, but declared the willingness of H.M.G. that it should come into being at the earliest possible moment after the war that Indians had agreed upon a constitution, subject however to such agreement and to the due fulfilment of the obligations arising from our historical connection with India." Nicholas Mansergh, ed., *The Transfer of Power 1942-7, Vol. I. The Cripps Mission, January-April 1942*, (London, 1970), p. 838,

diately upset the social balance and caused many tensions and conflicts. The situation was conducive to the corrosion of people's confidence in British capability. Tensions produced by these socio-political and military crisis mounted as the situation turned from bad to worse.

But Linlithgow was blissfully obdurate. If the Cripps Mission had succeeded, there is reason to believe, he might have resigned. He was not the man to stomach the ignominy of having to collaborate with the nationalist leadership. The failure of the Mission saved his skin, especially because he was not held solely responsible for the failure. Impervious to the growing unrest among Indians, Linlithgow happily reverted to the *status quo ante*.

It was expected in certain circles that the British Government would make another offer which might be acceptable to the majority ; even some Congress leaders shared the expectation. But Amery insisted that : "...initiative must now come from Indians. We can hardly be expected after this rejection, to go chasing them again, or to send out yet another emissary."²

It was obvious that no major constitutional change would take place during the war. However, following Cripps' plan, the Viceroy decided to expand his Council, on 2 July, 1942, by appointing five more Indians and one non-official European. Accepting Cripps' Defence formula, he bifurcated the defence portfolio and offered it to Feroze Khan Noon and left the war portfolio with his Commander-in-Chief.³

A logical outcome of the Cripps Mission, this move was intended to win over the waverers and the moderate elements of the Congress. But this objective was not fulfilled. Tej Bahadur Saprú, the Liberal leader who had first advocated complete Indianisation of the Viceroy's Executive Council, felt extremely disappointed.⁴ Saprú's suggestion was unacceptable

2. *Ibid.*

3. N.N. Mitra. ed., *The Indian Annual Register*, Vol. 2, 1942 (Calcutta, n.d.), p. 2.

4. Home Political File No. 220/42, National Archives, New Delhi. T.B. Saprú, in a press statement on 5 July 1942, stated : "It is only a continuation of policy of August offer...Home and Finance portfolios remain in British hands and war transport portfolio goes to non-

to the Government because, as Amery observed, that would alienate Muslim sentiments.⁵

II

Among the prominent Congress leaders, C. Rajagopalachari alone thought that it was Jinnah's flat refusal to co-operate with the Congress in the formation of a National Government which had led to the sudden breakdown of negotiations with Cripps. With this realization, he felt the imperative necessity of a Congress-League settlement, as a precondition for the formation of a National Government at the centre. He had the capacity to undertake the task, capable as he was of bold and independent thinking, unoppressed by the weight of Gandhian logic and strategy. It was at his initiative that the Congress in 1940 had made the Poona offer to the British Government. With Satyamurty, Bhulabhai Desai and others, he was also campaigning to bring back the Congress to the parliamentary path.

Rajagopalachari first moved towards Jinnah, for a settlement. Rajagopalachari believed that readiness for settlement with the opponent was a fundamental principle of non-violent action. On behalf of the Congress, he immediately recognized the Muslim League as a political organization, next in importance to the Congress. Jinnah, as a *quid pro quo*, promised that he would not hereafter dub the Congress as a Hindu body.

official British representative of big business. Admittedly Indians hold ten portfolios against five British portfolios. In ordinary circumstances control of Secretary of State over Council, which is invisible to outsider, is very real and persistent ; it cannot be less so in these days particularly with a man like Amery. Viceroy cannot be regarded as benevolent dictator. Morley once described Viceroy as Secretary of State's agent, a view unfortunately justified by present situation." *Ibid.*

5. Jinnah had great mistrust about the intentions of Tej Bahadur Supru and his association, the Non-Party Leaders Conference, which he believed, to be "a patrol" and "reconnoitring parties" on behalf of the Congress. He also believed that their main object was "to torpedo" the Pakistan scheme, their plan being very "plausible, subtle and treacherous". "They wanted to outmanoeuvre and sidetrack the Muslim demands." Home Political File No. 17/2/42,

*The talks, could not proceed further owing to Jinnah's demand to have a fifty per cent share in political power at the centre.*⁶

Rajagopalachari's own colleagues did not back him up. Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress president, totally disapproved the idea of granting recognition to the Muslim League's demand. Rajagopalachari, however, felt encouraged when Jinnah in a statement, on 15 April 1942, said : "If all parties agree to the Muslim demand for Pakistan or partition and Muslim right for self-determination, details to be settled after the war, then we are prepared to come to any reasonable adjustment with regard to the present."⁷

The green signal shown by Jinnah immediately resulted in a meeting of the Madras Legislative Congress party on 23 April, 1942, convened by Rajagopalachari himself. About 50 M.L.A.'s and about an equal number of invitees participated in the meeting. The purport of Rajagopalachari's speech was that the Congress should recognize the demand for Pakistan. He appealed to Congressman to get rid of their pre-conceived notions and to face facts. He believed that the Muslim demand for separate existence could only be prevented through a civil war. Finally, the meeting passed a resolution asking the AICC to acknowledge the Muslim League's claim for separation, should the same be persisted in when the time came for framing the future constitution of India ; and to invite the Muslim League for consultation for the purpose of arriving at an agreement and securing the installation of a National Government to meet the present emergency. The first part of the resolution was carried by thirty-seven for, six against and three neutral ; and the second part of the resolution by thirty-nine for, two against and five neutral.⁸

Rajagopalachari got not bouquets but brickbats from the Congress High Command. Nehru called it a "dangerous solution." At no price was he prepared to co-operate with the British at this juncture. He was, moreover, definitely opposed to the vivisection of India. Indeed, he was thinking in terms of a

6. Home Political File No. 4/19/42.

7. Mitra, n. 3, vol. 1, 1942, p. 72.

8. Home Political File No. n-6. Also Mitra, n. 3, vol. 1, 1942, p. 76.

federation of India, China, Iran and Afghanistan ; though he conceded the principle that separation of a territorial unit could not be withheld if a majority of the people demanded it.⁹ Azad also disfavoured the move. Kripalani, the Congress general secretary, felt that it was tantamount to repudiating the Congress aims and its historical past, its struggles and sufferings. Only Mian Iftikharuddin, the president of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee, praised Rajagopalachari for his bold initiative and termed it as a "unity of India move". B.S. Moonje, the Hindu Mahasabha leader, found the move "most humiliating".¹⁰ It was Gandhi who appreciated Rajagopalachari's motives : "But his worst enemy will not accuse him of any selfish motion behind the extraordinary energy with which he has thrown himself into the controversy of which he is the author. It reflects the greatest credit on him. He is entitled to a respectful hearing. His motive is lofty."¹¹

The CWC outvoted Rajagopalachari's plan on 28 April 1942. As a sequel Rajagopalachari resigned from the Working Committee on 30 April 1942.¹² The AICC (Allahabad, 29 April to 2 May 1942) rejected his proposal by 120 votes to 15. Instead the Committee passed a counter resolution by 92 votes to 17. This resolution stressed the Congress determination to oppose any scheme giving to any component state or territorial unit the freedom to recede from the Indian Union.¹³

Soon the Congress High Command decided to take disciplinary measures against Rajagopalachari. His continuation as a Congress member in the Madras Legislative Assembly was questioned by Vallabhbhai Patel, the president of Congress parliamentary board. At his request Gandhi advised Rajagopalachari to sever his connection with the Congress and then carry on his campaign with all the zeal and ability he was capable of.¹⁴ Directed by the AICC, the Tamilnad Congress

9. Home Political File No. *ibid.*

10. Mitra, n. 3, vol. 1, 1942, p. 83.

11. M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan* (Ahmedabad), 31 March 1942.

12. *Indian National Congress* (Allahabad, All India Congress Committee, 1946), pp. 115-6.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 27 ; Home Political File No. 97/42.

14. Gandhi to Rajagopalachari, 5 July 1942, *Gandhi Papers* (Gandhi Memorial Museum, New Delhi).

Committee proceeded to take disciplinary action against him. Thereupon Rajagopalachari, B. Sambamurthy, the ex-speaker, Dr. Rajan and Ramanathan, two ex-ministers, and eight others resigned their membership from the Assembly.¹⁵

III

Facing an identical situation, Gandhi reacted in a totally different way. Unlike Rajagopalachari, Gandhi believed that national unity could be achieved only by eliminating the third party, *i.e.*, the British Government, from the national scene. In an inspired moment (on a "Monday of Silence"), it dawned upon him that the only solution possible in the circumstances was for the British to leave India. In a letter to an old British (Quaker) friend he referred to the failure of the Cripps Mission and remarked : "The whole thing has left a bad taste in the mouth." He then added : "My firm opinion is that the British should leave India now in an orderly manner and not run the risk that they did in Singapore and Malaya and Burma. The act would mean courage of a high order, confession of human limitations and right doing by India."¹⁶

Once the idea was born, it gripped Gandhi completely. Now he devoted almost all his working time to the elucidation and justification of his formula which soon became famous as the Quit India demand. He argued that by liberating India Great Britain would strengthen the moral stand of the Allied powers that they were fighting for freedom and democracy. A morally strong United Nations could then expect greater sympathy and support from the whole world excluding only the Axis camp followers. He believed that peaceful withdrawal by Britain from her biggest colony "on the strength of bare inherent justice" of the cause would serve as an eye-opener to all the warring nations, particularly to the Axis power who harboured a deep grudge against the imperialist powers for possessing vast colonial dominions. Soon they might realize futility of war. With India's liberation, the decolonising process

15. Home Political File No. 18/7/42, Fortnightly report, Madras, July 1942.

16. M.K. Gandhi to Horrace Alexander, 22 April 1942. *Gandhi Papers*, *op. cit.*

would start all over the world. Such a clean and sweeping liquidation, of imperialism would indirectly help in burying up the fanaticism of Fascism and Nazism.

A completely different Gandhi now emerged on the Indian political scene. Previously sympathetic to the Allied cause, he had become a determined antagonist of the British.

Apart from the worsening war situation and the British refusal to part with power even in that hour of peril, Gandhi was upset also by the manner in which British Indian administration was carried on in the face of the growing hardships of the common people. Due to the severe strain of the war, the administrative machinery had collapsed in many places. There was a state of "ordered anarchy" prevailing in the country. Looting and rape had become the order of the day in certain areas, thanks largely to the troops that were supposed to defend the country and its people. Gandhi felt that if he remained a mute witness to such incidents, his "so-called Mahatmaship would be ridiculed, dishonoured and lost."¹⁷

A very bitter and angry man, Gandhi was frustrated with so much "hypocrisy, unreality and sham" in the relation between the Establishment and the masses, more so as there was apparently no way out of this entanglement. The prevailing system, it seemed, had eaten up the vitals and manliness of the whole nation. The British Government was treating the Indian people as chattels. Lacking in patriotism and national inspiration, the Indian soldiers were fighting like mercenaries.

Gandhi also realized that his constant exhortations on Hindu-Muslim unity could not produce any solution. National unity would never come so long as the third party continued on the scene. Its presence, Gandhi believed, had immeasurably aggravated disunity and communal differences. He, therefore, came to the conclusion that the only salvation for India lay in immediate British withdrawal. For this he was even prepared to face the risk of a complete breakdown of law and order in the country; out of such chaos some lasting solution might emerge. Besides, the Congress and the Muslim League, with their organized mass-bases, would soon be able to restore order in the country. Also, the Congress, with its non-violent

17. M.K. Gandhi, "Criminal Assaults", *Harijan*, 1 March 1942.

force, might command the respect of other forces in society and function as a saviour of the country. To eliminate any chance of military take-over, Gandhi suggested that the Indian army should be disbanded immediately along with the withdrawal of the British from India. Any Japanese thrust into India would be met by "unadulterated non-violence."¹⁸

Could an unarmed India protect herself against the Japanese? Was there any ground to believe that in the wake of British withdrawal, the Japanese would not enter into India? How long would the Allied army be able to defend India? One of the British Generals had publicly stated that they could not defend the whole of India.¹⁹ But Gandhi was convinced that powerful non-violent action could change the whole situation. The Japanese, if they enroached into India, would face a totally non-violent non-co-operative nation. In such an event they would have either to retreat or to exterminate the whole nation. The Japanese could hardly face the odium of the latter course.²⁰

Acting on this hypothesis, Gandhi prepared a draft resolution for consideration by the Congress High Command. Meanwhile, he had conditioned the minds of a large section of the Congress members by regularly contributing to the *Harijan* articles on the Quit India theme. Many of his followers were surprised by the way Gandhi was heading towards a crisis. On previous occasions, even after the declaration of war against the authorities, Gandhi used to move very slowly, always giving an impression that at any moment he might welcome a compromise. But this time it was different. Nehru, at first, was flabbergasted at Gandhi's stand. He could not compromise his hatred for Fascism and Nazism because of his distaste for

18. M.K. Gandhi, in *Harijan*, 26 April, 24 May, 31 May, 7 June, 14 June, 21 June, 28 June and 5 July 1942.

19. General Molesworth, Deputy Chief of the General Staff in India, said: "Every body in India is asking what are we going to do to keep the Japanese out. From the point of view of the Army in the enormous battle front we shall hold vital places which it is necessary to hold in order to make India safe but we cannot hold everyone." *Harijan*, 12 April 1942.

20. Mahadev Desai, "With Foreign Correspondents", *Harijan*, 19 April 1942.

British rule. Nor could he comprehend how a demand for immediate British withdrawal in the midst of a life and death struggle could bring India's independence. How could Gandhi forestall the inevitable Japanese invasion? How, after asking the British to quit, could the Congress claim that it was following the policy of non-embarrassment? Nehru was not alone. Several others entertained similar misgivings and doubts about the efficacy of the Gandhian scheme.

Knowing Nehru's and Azad's mental reservations about his scheme and knowing that his personal presence would hinder a free discussion, Gandhi sent his draft resolution through Meera Ben for consideration at the CWC meeting on 27 April 1942. On the basis of this draft, Rajendra Prasad prepared the following resolution :

Whereas the British War Cabinet's proposals sponsored by Sir Stafford Cripps have shown up British imperialism in its nakedness as never before, the AICC has come to the following conclusions :—

The AICC is of opinion that Britain is incapable of defending India. It is natural that whatever she does is for her own defence. There is an eternal conflict between Indian and British interests. It follows that their notions of defence would also differ. The British Government has no trust in India's political parties. The Indian army has been maintained up till now mainly to hold India in subjugation. It has been completely segregated from the general population who can in no sense regard it as their own. This policy of mistrust still continues and is the reason why national defence is not entrusted to India's elected representatives.

Japan's quarrel is not with India. She is warring against the British Empire. India's participation in the war has not been with the consent of the representatives of the Indian people. It was purely a British act. If India were freed her first step would probably be to negotiate with Japan. The Congress is of opinion that if the British withdrew from India, India would be able to defend herself in the event of Japanese or any aggressor attacking India.

The AICC is, therefore, of opinion that the British

should withdraw from India. The plea that they should remain in India for protecting the Indian princes is wholly untenable. It is additional proof of their determination to maintain their hold over India. The princes need have no fear from unarmed India.

The question of majority and minority is a creation of the British Government and would disappear on their withdrawal.

For all these reasons the Committee appeals to Britain, for the sake of her own safety, for the sake of India's safety and for the cause of world peace to let go her hold on India even if she does not give up all Asiatic and African possessions.

The resolution further declared that India had no feeling of enmity either towards Japan or towards any other nation. The Congress had no pro-Japanese sentiments either. It believed that its freedom struggle was essentially its own, and would be fought by its own non-violent strength, without any foreign military aid. If the Japanese were to attack India, the Congress would organize non-violent non-co-operation resistance against them. At the same time the resolution made it clear that the Congress would not assist the British either. It also disapproved of the Scorched Earth policy. Finally it appealed to the people to take up the constructive programme whole-heartedly.²¹

A number of Congress leaders including Nehru, Azad, Asaf Ali, Bhulabhai Desai and Rajagopalachari were opposed to this resolution. On the other hand, persons like Patel, Prasad and J.B. Kripalani, famous for following Gandhi's lead in all matters without any questioning, were in favour of it. Among the critics, Nehru felt that the resolution was favourable to the Japanese. He said: "...It may not be conscious. It is Gandhi's feeling that Japan and Germany will win. This feeling unconsciously governs his decision."²²

21. *Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances 1942-43* (New Delhi, Government of India, 1943), pp. 46-8.

22. Record of the Allahabad meeting of the CWC. *Ibid.*, pp. 42-6.

According to a Government report, Gandhi was convinced (i) that the Axis powers would win the war (ii) that the Japanese would invade India after the monsoon—which would be a favourable opportunity for the Congress to launch civil disobedience, the inter-

After prolonged discussion on the resolution, Nehru submitted a separate draft. Though Rajendra Prasad's resolution was carried and Nehru's lost, at the president's (Azad's) intervention the Committee unanimously accepted Nehru's draft.²³ This resolution was later endorsed by the AICC at Allahabad (29 April to 2 May 1942).

Like Prasad's resolution, Nehru's too drew attention to the failure of the Cripps Mission, which had led to great bitterness in India against the British, and declared that the Congress could no longer consider any scheme which retained any element of British control or authority in India. The British hold on India must be abandoned. It was only on the basis of independence that India could deal with Great Britain or any other nation. India's involvement in the war was the result of a purely British act. If India were free when the war broke out, she would have determined her own policy and might have kept out of it; although her sympathies would in any event have been with the victims of aggression. At the same time, in view of the danger of increasing pro-Japanese sentiment in India as a result of bitterness against the British Government, the AICC took care to repudiate the idea that freedom could come to India through interference or invasion by any foreign country, whatever the profession of that country. If such an invasion did take place, the Indian people must resist it, through non-violent non-co-operation with the invaders, and non-interference with the work of the British forces.²⁴

Nehru differed from Gandhi not only over the language of his draft resolution, but found himself strongly opposed to Gandhi's entire approach at that critical juncture. He felt that

vening period being spent in preparing the ground for a mass movement... By eliminating British control, internal dissensions could be healed. Home Political File No. 18/7/42, Fortnightly report, U.P., July 1942.

23. Kripalani writes: "Azad even threatened to resign. The other members thought that the resignation by the Maulana at that time would complicate matters...In the altered resolution the operative part of Gandhi's draft asking the British to withdraw was omitted." J.B. Kripalani, *Gandhi: His Life and Thought* (New Delhi, Government of India, 1970), p. 200.

24. *Congress Bulletin* (Allahabad, All India Congress Committee, n.d.), 23 May 1942.

Gandhi's stand was not compatible with anti-fascism. Nehru's predilection for the people of China and Russia was well-known. He was mortally afraid that by demanding British withdrawal from India, the Congress might jeopardize the national independence and security of China. Nehru found it very difficult to compromise his international commitment to fight against fascism because of the pursuit of India's immediate national objective. Part of Nehru's difficulty stemmed from the fact that he was not prepared to alienate sympathy for Indian cause in certain liberal circles in Great Britain and America. Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese leader who had pro-Congress sympathies, hoped that in view of the recent reverses sustained by the United Nations in Libya the Congress would exercise the maximum forbearance and refrain from drastic action. This had to be done for the common cause of the United Nations so that India could get the sympathy of those nations and the Indian problem could be solved.²⁵

Lampton Berry, an associate of Colonel Louis Johnson, and J.J. Singh, an Indian businessman and journalist, informed Nehru about the growing disenchantment of liberal Americans towards the Congress cause. Berry remarked : "I think you should know that Mr. Gandhi's statements are being misunderstood in the United States and being construed as opposing our war aims." J.J. Singh reported that there was a rapid decline in American interest and sympathy for the Indian cause.²⁶

Nehru was naturally confused and hesitant. One of his friends wrote to him²⁷ :

I could not understand your position. I felt that logically you should—if you wanted to help the war efforts—be with C.R. (Rajagopalachari) and it grieved me. Your last statement has put heart into me again or I feel you will come round to Bapu's (Gandhi's) way of action in the end and all will be well. We may not have divisions in Congress at this juncture—it is too critical.

25. Chiang Kai-shek to S.H. Shen, 8 June 1942, *Nehru Papers* (Nehru Memorial Museum, New Delhi).

26. Lampton Berry to Nehru, 20 June, and 4 August 1942 and J.J. Singh to Nehru, 26 June 1942, *Nehru Papers*, (Nehru Memorial Museum New Delhi).

27. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur to Jawaharlal Nehru, 22 May 1942, *Nehru Papers* (Nehru Memorial Museum, New Delhi).

Gandhi, however, knew his mind. He was determined to insist on British withdrawal from India : "Our course is absolutely clear. Risk there is. But attainment of freedom without risk is not worth working at."²⁸ Gandhi had firmly set the tone. He expected the Congress to follow his line.

To discuss the situation and formulate its stand, the CWC met at Wardha (7 to 14 July 1942). Gandhi attended the sessions and explained his plan. Differences among the Congress leaders again came to the surface. Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru, G.B. Pant, Syed Mahmud and Asaf Ali had doubts about the whole idea of a struggle at that time. They felt that China, Russia and America (all were now allied with Britain) would misunderstand Congress intentions, and the Congress would be labelled as a Japanese ally by British propagandists. Besides there was every possibility that the Government would suppress the movement in a ruthless manner. But the dissenting members had no alternative plan to offer to meet the external threat. Gandhi told them that if they declined to become a party "to the hazardous plan of action proposed by him" he would go alone. He suggested that the Congress could, however, pass a resolution to the effect that such Congressmen and others, who agreed with his plan of action, should help him by joining his *satyagraha* movement.

Gandhi had struck at the right psychological and political moment. Nobody could think of losing him at that critical moment. Gandhi "at last convinced Jawaharlal that what he proposed was the only way to meet the situation created by the obstinacy of the Imperial Government, which was ready to lose India to the Japanese rather than do the right thing, even in its hour of the greatest peril." Other members too felt like Nehru and saw the resolution in this light.²⁹

Nehru himself tells us that "...Gandhiji's general approach...seemed to ignore important international considerations and appeared to be based on a narrow view of nationalism..." Nehru mainly tried to convince Gandhi that

28. M.K. Gandhi to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, 2 June 1942, *Gandhi Papers* (Gandhi Memorial Museum, New Delhi).

29. Kripalani, n. 23, pp. 201-2.

30. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Bombay, 1969), p. 473.

any effective mass movement was bound to interfere with the war-effort, and that indirectly it would help the enemy. In Nehru's words³⁰ :

Our mutual discussion led to a clarification of much that had been vague and cloudy, and to Gandhiji's appreciation of many international factors to which his attention was drawn... But the fundamental attitude remained : his objection to a passive submission to British autocratic and repressive policy in India and his intense desire to do something to challenge this.

Abul Kalam Azad, too, in his memoirs, mentions his differences with Gandhi on this issue, and says that Gandhi asked both him and Nehru to resign from the CWC. Gandhi sent a letter saying that his stand was so different from Azad's that they could not work together. If the Congress wanted Gandhi as the leader of the movement Azad must resign from the presidentship and also withdraw from the Working Committee. Jawaharlal also must do the same.³¹

The differences between Gandhi and Nehru were soon adjusted. Nehru, who had been already marked out as the political heir to Gandhi, felt it was not honourable for him to stand apart as an onlooker while a fight went on between the British rulers on the one hand and the Indian people on the other. Besides, he might have also considered it impolitic to defy Gandhi's leadership at that moment and thus impair his future prospects as the leader of the Indian people. Following his example, Azad and others, too, holding views similar to his, lined up behind Gandhi.

The Working Committee (7 to 14 July 1942) passed two important resolutions. The first resolution contained some guidelines to the people to meet the situation caused by large scale evacuation of persons from affected areas due to seizure of private property by the Government for war needs. It demanded that no one should be required to vacate his house unless proper arrangements had been made for the evacuees. It added that compensation should be paid promptly on the spot and not at

31. Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom* (Calcutta, 1959), p. 76.

the district headquarters.³²

Dealing with the "National Demand", the second resolution was to form later the basis of the "Quit India" resolution. It called for immediate termination of British rule not only because foreign domination, even at its best, *per se* was a continuing evil for the subject people, but also because India in bondage could play no effective part in defending herself and in shaping the fortunes of the war that was desolating humanity. The Congress was eager to avoid the experience of Singapore, Malaya and Burma ; to transform Indian resentment against Great Britain into goodwill ; and to make India a willing partner in a joint enterprise of securing the freedom of the world. But India's co-operation was possible only if she felt the glow of freedom. The Congress had no desire to embarrass Britain or other Allied powers in their prosecution of the war, or to encourage a Japanese invasion of India, or to add to the pressure on China. It would agree to the stationing in India of Allied troops in order to ward off Japanese or other aggression and to help China. Should, however, the British refuse to quit India, the Congress would not see with equanimity the consequent deterioration of the Indian situation and the weakening of India's will and power to resist aggression. It would be compelled to start a widespread struggle on non-violent lines under Gandhi's leadership.³³ It was decided that

32. *Indian National Congress Report*, n. 12, pp. 117-20; also *Congress Bulletin* (Allahabad, All India Congress Committee, n.d.), 1 November 1945.

33. *Ibid*, pp. 120-4.

Though the resolution embodying Gandhi's line, was unanimously passed, some of the members had mental reservations. Syed Mahmud wrote a letter to the Viceroy after some time from the Ahmednagar Fort, stating among other things, that he had been against the resolution and had resigned from the Working Committee. J.B. Kripalani believes that even Maulana Azad, the Congress president had not wholeheartedly accepted the Quit India resolution. Kripalani also states that besides Syed Mahmud and Maulana Azad, Asaf Ali, Jawaharlal Nehru and Govind Ballabh Pant were also critical of the resolution. According to him, the controversy was not about violence and non-violence, but about how the movement would be understood by America, China and Russia which had impressed upon Britain the need to grant India sufficient freedom to be able to help the Allied cause. Kripalani, n. 23, pp. 203-4.

this decision of the Working Committee would be placed for approval before the AICC, which would meet in Bombay from 7 August 1942.

IV

The demand for British withdrawal and the threat of a non-violent mass movement if this demand was not met sent a wave of excitement and unrest throughout the country. Apart from the rank and file of the Congress, the Congress Socialists, the Forward Blocists and other leftist elements, excluding the Communists, welcomed the Congress stand and eagerly looked forward to the launching of the movement. But there also followed a spate of adverse and hostile reactions both within and outside the country. The Congress leadership, however, stuck to its position that the immediate cessation of foreign rule was demanded not to embarrass the British, but to enable India to defend herself and to lend whole-hearted support to the Allies.

But the critics treated the Congress stand as irrelevant and irrational. They could not comprehend how the Congress could adopt such a stand after its Poona and Bardoli offers. To the *Times of India* Gandhi seemed to be living in another planet, completely oblivious to the facts of life. "It is useless to argue in the midst of world cataclysm with a man whose statements are *reductio ad absurdum*. We suggest that Mr. Gandhi should retire completely from political affairs and devote himself to philanthropic works."³⁴

The *Eastern Times* alleged that the Congress wanted to sell India to Japan : "People are asking whether this move at this grave juncture is not the result of some secret understanding between Gandhi and Axis powers on the lines perhaps that the Japanese should not bomb Indian towns but meet with a ready welcome on arrival..."³⁵

The *Dawn*, the Muslim League paper, warned that in the event of British withdrawal the rule of the jungle would be promulgated in India. It was unbelievable that the Axis

34. *Times of India* (Bombay), 19 May 1942.

35. *Eastern Times* (Cuttack), 19 July 1942.

Powers should wait patiently until India had had its taste of anarchy. The resolution was a challenge not only to the British Government and the United Nations, but also to the other parties in India.³⁶

The *Independent India* of M.N. Roy wrote that the resolution was "just playing to the gallery, an attempt to hoodwink ill-informed liberal elements in England and America..."³⁷

Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Liberal leader, had said much earlier that the time had come when the Mahatma in decency should retire from politics.³⁸ After the publication of the Wardha resolution several Liberal leaders openly questioned the wisdom of the Congress leadership. Chimanlal Setalvad was not sure whether the Congress leadership was practising colossal self-deception or trying to fool the people. Hriday Nath Kunzru, president of the Servants of India Society, warned that the "...launching of a mass civil disobedience movement would be detrimental to the best interests of the country."³⁹

Asserting that the resolution had created "a most dangerous and most serious situation in the country,"⁴⁰ Jinnah charged Gandhi of attempting to establish Congress-Hindu domination over the Muslims and other minorities. He further said that Gandhi might threaten, intimidate and coerce a distressed and shaken Britain by this "big move." But, Jinnah added, the League would not be deflected from the cherished goal of Pakistan.⁴¹ The Hindu Mahasabha was also not in favour of any movement at this moment. Representing the depressed classes, Ambedkar said: "...it would be madness to weaken law and order when the barbarians are at our gates." His colleague, P.N. Rajbhoj, even threatened to start a counter-satyagraha against Gandhi's *satyagraha*⁴² The Communists

36. *Dawn* (Delhi), 19 July 1942.

37. *Independent India* (Delhi), 22 July 1942.

38. Tej Bahadur Sapru to B. Shiva Rao, 28 May 1942, Home Political File No. 220/42.

39. *Mitra*, n. 3, vol. 2, 1942, pp. 10, 12.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

41. Home Political File No. 18/6/42, Fortnightly report, Bombay, June 1942.

42. Home Political File No. 18/7/42, Fortnightly report, C.P., July 1942.

The president of the National Democratic Union said that they

neither denounced nor supported the Congress for adopting such a course. But they clearly stated that the root cause of the deadlock was "the refusal of British die-hards to recognize Indian independence and implement it here and now."⁴³

Chinese and American reactions to the proposed movement were also unfavourable. This was so in spite of attempts by Nehru and Azad to improve the image of the Congress by giving various pro-Allied interpretations to its demand. Gandhi himself had somewhat modified his emphasis, perhaps in deference to Nehru's pleadings, and to a belief in some Congress circles that America or China or both might put pressure on Britain to come to terms with nationalist India. Without deviating from his insistence on British withdrawal, Gandhi stressed that he was not playing the Axis game. Already, in June 1942, he had written : " (IF)...it is deemed necessary by the Allies to remain in India to prevent Japanese occupation, they should do so, subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by the national government that may be set up after the British withdrawal."⁴⁴ Gandhi had also assured the Chinese that India would not commit national suicide by letting down the Allied powers. Any demand for withdrawal of the Allied troops during the pendency of the war itself being an act of violence, it was imperative to keep the Allied troops in India to defend her frontiers.⁴⁵

In order to clarify his position still further, Gandhi addressed an open letter to the Japanese. Since it was not the intention of the Congress to select this particular moment to embarrass the Allies, he warned the Japanese that they would not receive "a willing welcome" from Indians. He condemned

would not allow the country to be betrayed by a misguided visionary like Gandhi. R. Coupland, *Indian Politics Part II, 1935-42* (Oxford, 1944), p. 295.

Jamnadas Mehta of All India Nationalist Congress said : "...the recent resolution of the Congress Working Committee is most inopportune in view of imminent danger of foreign invasion." *The Hindu* (Madras), 1 August 1942.

43. P.C. Joshi's (General Secretary, the Communist Party of India) statement, *The Hindu*, 5 August 1942.

44. M.K. Gandhi, "A Poser", *Harijan*, 28 June 1942.

45. M.K. Gandhi to Chiang Kai-Shek, 14 June 1942, *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 15 August 1942.

the Japanese attack on China, and reiterated that Free India was willing to let the Allies retain their troops in India. The offer was made in order to prove that the Congress did not in any way mean to harm the Allied cause and to disabuse the Japanese of a possible feeling that they had but to step into the country that Britain had vacated.⁴⁶

Reassuring the Chinese people, Gandhi told them that India's liberation would further strengthen their defence.⁴⁷

In a personal letter to Chiang Kai-Shek, Gandhi said that he would not take any hasty step and try to avoid a conflict with the British. But in regard to India's freedom, he would be willing to face the most hazardous difficulties.⁴⁸

These assurances to China and other Allied powers, in fact, constituted appeals for their joint or individual intervention with the British on India's behalf. It was implied that if they intervened the Congress could still continue its policy of non-embarrassment. Otherwise it would be forced to launch a mass civil disobedience movement.⁴⁹

V

Even after the passing of the Wardha resolution, some efforts were made to dissuade Gandhi from taking the deep plunge. The four dissident Congress leaders of Madras, C. Rajagopalachari, K. Santhanam, S. Ramanathan and T.S. Rajan, conveyed to Gandhi their misgivings about the success of the whole move. To them, at that moment, a power vacuum was neither possible nor desirable. They did not like the threat of anarchy inherent in a mass movement at that stage. They pointed out that the authorities would not allow the movement to proceed under central direction in an orderly fashion, and added: "when responsible leaders are removed and their guidance is no longer available, the movement can easily be taken

46. M.K. Gandhi, "To Every Japanese", *Harijan*, 26 July 1942.

47. *The Hindu*, 8 August 1942

48. M.K. Gandhi to Chiang Kai-Shek, 14 June 1942, *Hindustan Times*, 15 August 1942.

49. M.K. Gandhi, "To American Friends" *Harijan*, 9 August 1942,

advantage of by the enemy and be converted into a fifth column activity on his behalf.”⁵⁰

Tej Bahadur Sapru came out with a positive suggestion. He wanted a Round Table Conference of leaders of all parties and communities to be organised for the removal of the existing tension. He also appealed to the Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council to contribute to the solution of the deadlock.⁵¹ Not prepared to be deflected from his set course at that stage, Gandhi rejected the suggestion.

It was not yet clear, however, as to what shape the movement was expected to take. Some indication of it was first given by Vallabhbhai Patel in June 1942. Speaking at a public meeting at Ahmedabad, he hinted that the proposed movement would include all the items adopted in the previous movements—from strikes to boycott, and civil resistance. Short and swift, the struggle would be over within a week.⁵² Nehru expected the the coming movement to be unique in Congress history, and hoped that everyone, irrespective of socio-political distinctions, would participate in it.⁵³ Yusuf Meharally, the Congress Socialist leader, said that commitment to India's freedom would be the only qualification for participation in the movement.⁵⁴

After the Wardha meeting of the CWC (14 July 1942), the Congress High Command issued instructions for large scale enrolment of volunteers and asked provincial and district committees to get prepared for the coming movement. From 14 July to 5 August, the Congress president carried on a series of discussions with Congress leaders from different parts of the country, and impressed upon them the need to conduct the movement strictly according to Gandhi's instructions—in case

50. *Congress Responsibility*, n. 21, pp. 49-50.

51. Home Political File No. 3/10/42.

52. Home Political File No. 18/6/42, Fortnightly report, Bombay, June 1942.

53. Home Political File No. 18/7/42, Fortnightly report, U P., June 1942.

54. Home Political File No. 3/10/42.

According to a Government Intelligence report (30 May 1942), Gandhi was prepared to take full responsibility for the movement. He sent Khurshed Ben Naoroji, Meera Ben, Ram Manohar Lohia and Mridula Sarabhai to carry out propaganda and to prepare the ground in Bengal, Orissa and Bombay for the ensuing movement, Mansergh, n. 1, vol. 2, p. 154.

the Government allowed them the freedom to function. But if the Government arrested Gandhi and the other Congress leaders, "the people would be free to adopt any method, violent or non-violent, to oppose the violence of the Government in every possible way." These instructions were secret and never made public.⁵⁵

According to an official report, Patel had advised the mill-owners of Ahmedabad to paralyse the textile industry at the time of the movement. The Textile Labour Association was already engaged in secret propaganda. The cloth market *mahajans* were contemplating a long strike extending over two months in case Gandhi was arrested. The Congress was also busy wooing the student community. It was generally believed that non-payment of taxes, anti-war propaganda, general strikes to hamper war production, the refusal to evacuate areas required by military authorities and the establishment of a parallel Congress government would be included in the programme. Like the leftist elements, the right wing Congress leadership was also carrying on propaganda in favour of a general defiance of the law, boycotts, strikes, non-rent campaigns and hunger strikes.⁵⁶ The Andhra Provincial Congress Committee, in one of its circulars to the District Congress Committees (29 July 1942), adumbrated a six-stage programme. Including all the well-known Gandhian protest tactics like picketting, boycotting, non-cooperation, non-payment of revenues, it contained a remarkable innovation in that it advocated the cutting of telegraph and telephone wires. Though it was expected that Gandhi would inaugurate the movement within a few hours after the scheduled meeting of the AICC in Bombay, no action would be taken unless Gandhi had given the call. Meanwhile organisational preparations had to be made, and morale maintained at a high pitch.⁵⁷

55. Azad, n. 31, pp. 61-82.

56. Home Political File No. 18/7/42, Fortnightly report, Bombay, July 1942.

57. *Congress Responsibility*, n. 21, pp. 55-6.

This circular was issued in the name of Kala Venkata Rao, General Secretary, Andhra Provincial Congress Committee.

Pattabhi Sitaramayya, a Congress leader from Andhra, in a press statement at Bezwada on 18 July 1945 took credit and full responsibility for the aforesaid circular. He said that all the instructions contained

The Congress, it is clear, was preparing for the worst eventuality, and considering ways of sustaining popular interest in the movement. Finding that jail-going had become too common and stale a device, the U.P. Congress Committee mentioned in its instructions (24 July 1942) to workers: "It is likely that the first step in the movement will be an all-India *hartal*, something of the nature of the famous *hartat* of April 6, 1919. . . In the ultimate analysis every worker may have to be a self-sufficient entity carrying on the programme to the best of his ability." For effective organization, the province was to be divided into five zones with headquarters at Banaras, Kanpur, Lucknow, Meerut and Muradabad.⁵⁸

Gandhi's own thinking was along the following lines:

- (a) There should be an all India *hartal*.
- (b) All freedom loving Indians should join the struggle.
- (c) Students should leave Government-controlled educational institutions.
- (d) People should break the salt laws and refuse to pay the land-taxes.
- (e) At a later stage Government employees should also participate.
- (f) Members of central and provincial assemblies and municipalities should vacate their seats.
- (g) As a last resort, every Congressman would be his own leader and a servant of the whole nation. Every *satyagrahi* should vow that he would either be free or would die in the attempt to make himself so.

These ideas were discussed in the CWC on 7 August 1942, but not finally adopted.⁵⁹ The Congress leadership had thus failed to draw up a detailed programme of action by the time the AICC adopted the Quit India resolution. After that it was too late.

in it had the approval of Gandhi except the one pertaining to the cutting of telegraph wires, which was not prohibited though not recommended. Home Political File No. 18/7/45, Fortnightly report, Madras, July 1945.

58. Home Political File No. 3/31/42.

59. Home Political File No. 3/24/45.

VI

The AICC met in Bombay on 7 August 1942. It was attended by 250 members. The main resolution, which became famous as the Quit India resolution, was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru and seconded by Vallabhbhai Patel. It was carried by a big majority, only a few Communist members (12) opposing it. Abul Kalam Azad, at the very beginning, remarked : "Let us have a declaration of Indian Independence forthwith and we, on our part, shall, immediately enter into a Treaty of Alliance with the United Nations for the sole purpose of fighting and winning this war." To dispel British and American doubts, he clarified that the Quit India demand stood only for transfer of power.⁶⁰ Gandhi appealed to the United Nations and Britain to declare India free and prove their *bona fides*. Here was "the opportunity of a life-time," he warned, "which never comes twice in the same generation, and history will say that they did not discharge their overdue debt to India."⁶¹

The AICC reiterated that India's defence was cracking up due to the continuation of British rule. and that the whole-hearted participation of the masses in the war effort could only be secured by immediately ending that rule. The Committee affirmed that the primary functions of a provisional National Government would be "...to defend India and resist aggression with all the armed as well as the non-violent forces at its command, together with the Allied powers..."

The Committee also felt sanguine that India's freedom would be a prelude to the independence of all the Asian colonies of Western powers. It looked forward to the formation of a world Federation of free nations which would prevent aggression and exploitation by one nation over another ; guarantee the protection of national minorities ; and help the advancement of all backward areas and peoples, and the pooling of the world's resources for the common good of all. The goal of disarmament would also materialize through a world federation. For keeping international peace, the Committee suggested the formation of a World Federation Defence Forces.⁶²

60. *The Hindu*, 8 August 1942.

61. *Ibid.*, 10 August 1942.

62. *Indian National Congress Report*, n. 12, pp. 29-35.

All this was, of course, said to impress world opinion. So far as the main demand was concerned, the Quit India resolution made it clear that there could be no going back on it. Gandhi reflected this mood of the Congress in his speech of 8 August : "Even if all the United Nations oppose me, even if the whole of India tried to persuade me that I am wrong, even then I will go ahead, not for India's sake alone, but for the sake of the world..."⁶³

It seems, however, that Gandhi was contemplating to have a gap of one to two weeks before launching the movement. His plan was to seek an interview with the Viceroy. The Congress president was to write to the heads of the major Allied powers informing them of the Congress decision. May be Gandhi was expecting that the proposed move would serve as a warning to the Government and oblige it to come to terms with the Congress. He felt sure that the Government would not precipitate matters by resorting to immediate action.

VII

Gandhi's assessment was unfounded. While he had been speaking and writing about the Quit India demand, the British authorities had been considering ways and means of dealing with him and the Congress.

By the first week of June 1942, Linlithgow had realised that Gandhi was in a determined mood and he might launch a movement on his own even if he could not carry the Working Committee with him. "Present indications are that he will throw off all pretensions of non-embarrassment, declare himself openly anti-British..."⁶⁴ Opposed to any hasty measure, the Viceroy argued that official action against the Congress would at

63. *The Hindu*, 10 August 1942.

In the concluding session of the AICC, Gandhi said : "If I wait any longer, God will punish me. I am not speaking for India alone. This is the last struggle of my life. Delay is injurious and waiting any further would be humiliation for all of us. It is high time that we are free so that we can help other nations struggling for freedom." *Ibid.*

64. Government of India's (Home Department) letter to Secretary of State for India, 7 June 1942, Mansergh. n. 1, vol. 2, p. 188.

that stage enable Gandhi to strengthen his movement. The Viceroy was also afraid that he might eventually have to eat the humble pie by being obliged to come to terms with the Congress. Then there was the risk that by proscribing the Congress, he might encourage the latter to take the line of "the Sinn Fein movement in Ireland to develop their own parallel and opposing system."⁶⁵

For the time being, at any rate, he would avoid a confrontation with the Congress if he could do so without impairing the war-effort. Should the Congress attitude, however, force him "to take them on", he was prepared to employ the utmost vigour and arrest the top Congress leadership including Gandhi.⁶⁶ But he would not hit at them prematurely lest they should advertise themselves as martyrs before having been fully exposed to British and American public opinion. As late as 11 July 1942, Linlithgow confided to the Governor of Punjab⁶⁷ :

...if he does really start serious business, we should have to be prepared to deal with him with the gloves off... He has been pushed off his slogan of a month ago. It is now so covered with interpretations by the Mahatma that it would defy the wit of any man to discover what exactly it meant at the present day... I still find it a little difficult to believe that they will take on an out-and-out campaign against us. I think it much more likely that Gandhi will continue to frame resolutions designed to make our blood curdle and to keep public nerves on the stretch, but to avoid any major battle, and to have ready as many avenues of escape as he can, if he finds that his new nostrum is not going as it should.

Himself disfavours immediate strong action against the

65. Linlithgow to Amery, 15 June 1942, *ibid.*, p. 214.

He added : "If Congress or any other organized political party, however obnoxious its leaders may be, does in fact represent an organization sufficiently powerful to be able to speak with authority for a vast proportion of the electors in this country, its view cannot be ignored ; and the difficulty which I have felt in the past about committing ourselves to a line of policy in regard to it from which we might have to resile with grave loss of face does not seem to me to be much less than it was in the past." *Ibid.*, pp. 213-4.

66. Linlithgow to Amery, 26 June 1942, *ibid.*, p. 273.

67. Linlithgow to B. Glancy, 11 July 1942, *ibid.*, p. 367-8.

Congress, Linlithgow was under constant pressure to do so from the Secretary of State for India, the Home Member and most of the Provincial Governors to smash the Congress organization as soon as possible. The Home Member seemed pretty categorical : "We should let Congress know that in face of their hostile attitude we will have no further dealings with them as a political party either now or in the future..."⁶⁸ H. Twynam, Governor of the Central Provinces, argued that the psychological moment had arrived to drop the policy of appeasement. Fed up with Gandhi's "obscurantist, impractical and anti-British leadership", he wondered "how long are we going to allow this Britain-hater to stage subversive moment after subversive moment."⁶⁹ M. Hallett, Governor of U.P., reminded the Governor-General that the heavens had not fallen when Gandhi was arrested in the past. If anything, in the time of war, delayed action meant risk.⁷⁰ More "radical" than his colleagues, A. Hope, Governor of Madras, suggested that if the movement came to anything, Gandhi, "the villain of the piece", should at once be arrested and secretly exiled to Mauritius or Kenya. Even if he undertook fast or died, the fact should not be publicised. The news of his death should be announced after six months. Hope wanted the convicted Congress leaders to be treated as common criminals and not as political prisoners.⁷¹

Only R. Lumley, Governor of Bombay, appreciated the Viceroy's concern for avoiding precipitate action. Since he expected the Congress to split if Gandhi insisted on going ahead with his projected move, Lumley comfortably suggested : "We could afford to let him do his worst and allow opinion to turn against him without giving him the halo of martyrdom which action against him would provide."⁷²

Realising that the Indian situation was turning from bad to worse, the Secretary of State, Amery, was convinced of the imminence of a mass movement by the increasingly implacable attitude of the Congress towards the Government. He felt perturbed and started pleading for a tough line against the

68. Linlithgow to Amery, 15 June 1942, *ibid.*, p. 205.

69. H. Twynam (C.P.) to Linlithgow, 9 June 1942, *ibid.*, p. 196.

70. M. Hallett (U.P.) to Linlithgow, 16 June 1942, *ibid.*, p. 222.

71. A. Hope (Madras) to Linlithgow, 23 July 1942, *ibid.*, p. 443.

72. R. Lumley (Bombay) to Linlithgow, 6 June 1942, *ibid.*, p. 187.

Congress. He wrote to the Viceroy : "There is, I fear, a real danger of the old man's wounded vanity and Nehru's unreasoning bitterness drawing the two together into something near open revolution."⁷³ He implored the Viceroy to arrest Gandhi and other Congress leaders immediately even without referring to him.⁷⁴ Amery wanted these leaders to be politically incapacitated by being deported to places far away from India. He was particularly insistent on the deportation of Gandhi to Uganda (The Burmese leader U. Saw was detained there). Regarding Gandhi, Amery argued, perhaps naively. "As long as he is in India the Press will be talking about him daily, whereas if he disappears there just will not be anything to say, and he can then fast to death or do what he likes. The same remedy may also have to be applied to Nehru and such others..."⁷⁵

Gradually Linlithgow, too, veered round to this line of thinking. He agreed with Amery that "a dramatic move of this nature might well produce a deep impression on followers of the Congress."⁷⁶ His idea was to despatch fifteen leaders by air to Uganda, using the Arabian route, *via* Muscat, Aden and Khartoum.⁷⁷ He was more particular about deporting Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel.⁷⁸ But Linlithgow's plan was slightly upset by the discovery that, suffering from high blood pressure, Gandhi and many other senior Congress leaders were medically unfit to undertake a long air journey. It was, therefore, arranged that a war ship would be made available at Bombay by 8 August, "to convoy small number of political prisoners to Kilindini for Uganda."⁷⁹

Soon another difficulty arose. In Uganda the Indian community was in a quite dominant position. The presence of Indian leaders might cause hostile reactions there. Nyasaland was thought of as a possible alternative, and the Colonial Secretary, Viscount Cranborne, was requested by the Secretary of State

73. Amery to Linlithgow, 29 May 1942. *ibid.*, pp. 142-3.

74. *Ibid.*, 28 May 1942, p. 141.

75. *Ibid.*, 17 June 1942, p. 225.

76. Linlithgow to Amery, 19 July 1942, *ibid.*, p. 410.

77. Linlithgow to Amery, 21 July 1942, *ibid.*, p. 424.

78. Linlithgow to all Provincial Governors, 27 July 1942, *ibid.*, pp. 466-7.

79. Commander-in-Chief Eastern Fleet to First Sea Lord, 29 July 1942, *ibid.*, p. 494.

for India to make preliminary arrangements with the local Government. In the case of Gandhi, it was decided to send him first to Aden ; from there he might be sent to Australia or Sudan. The War Cabinet discussed the matter on 6 August 1942, and approved of Gandhi's deportation. It was also resolved that the final responsibility for Gandhi would rest with His Majesty's Government.⁸⁰ On board the ship Gandhi would be accompanied not only by medical attendants but also by an officer empowered to take decisions on behalf of the Government of India in case of an emergency. Such an unequivocal exercise of British authority was expected to destroy the legend of Gandhi's power of defiance.⁸¹

Initially in favour of the move, Linlithgow later developed doubts about Gandhi's fitness to make the trip to Aden. Quite apart from the physical strain involved in a long air or sea journey, internment in a foreign country would cause difficulties over food and medical attention. So the Viceroy, in consultation with the Bombay Governor, decided that Gandhi would be detained in a comfortable house somewhere in Bombay. Later the Bombay Governor suggested that Gandhi and his party could stay at the Aga Khan's house at Yervada near Poona.⁸²

Once it was clear that Gandhi could not be deported, Linlithgow saw no use in deporting other Congress leaders. Once the idea of deportation had been rendered partially impracticable, other considerations against it started acquiring a new significance. Deportation of the Congress leaders, it was realised, might cause adverse reaction in America; and the Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, "in their present excited and nervous frame of mind," were least likely to support deportation.⁸³

Government was considering the forts of Dargai, Attock and Ahmednagar for confining the Congress leaders.⁸⁴ The main object of this scheme was to render the movement abortive, as well as "to discredit and immobilize leaders, while doing as little

80. Minutes of War Cabinet, 6 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 588.

81. Amery to Linlithgow, 7 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 596.

82. Linlithgow to Amery, 26 June 1942, *ibid.*, pp. 272-3 and R. Lumley (Bombay), to Linlithgow, 17 July 1942, *ibid.*, p. 406.

83. Linlithgow to Amery, 7 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 597.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 517.

as possible to antagonise rank and file, and to stress preventive character of action taken.”⁸⁵

To avoid publicity and the excitement of trials, it was decided to arrest and detain the Congress leaders under Defence Rule 26 or 129. It was at first proposed that Gandhi would be detained under Regulation III of 1818 ; but the idea was dropped on the ground that the use of a century-old regulation might cause adverse reaction in America.⁸⁶

While the CWC at Wardha was debating whether it should go ahead with the Quit India demand, the Governor-General was, on 11 July 1942, reminding the provincial Governments to be ready to follow the line that he had prescribed on 2 August 1940. This was a reference to the Emergency Powers Ordinance of 1940. The Viceroy said: “Even if use of Ordinance proves unnecessary, prompt arrest of leaders may be essential and it is desirable therefore that your A and B list should be reviewed and held in readiness.”⁸⁷

After the adoption of the Quit India resolution by the CWC at Wardha, the Governor-General-in-Council met on 29 July 1942 to formulate its line of action. The Governor General indicated that he was contemplating the arrest of Gandhi, along with all the members of the Working Committee and selected members of the AICC. The arrests were deferred till 8 August. The Council empowered the Viceroy to take “very rapid and drastic action” to meet the situation. The Viceroy told the Council that since Gandhi “meant business” this time, there would be very little time between the AICC session and the commencement of the movement. The general tenor of opinion within the Council was that there should be mass arrests of Congress leaders. Some members emphasized the importance of keeping them under prolonged detention.⁸⁸ Speaking in the House of Commons on 30 July 1942, Amery reiterated that the Government of India would crush any movement caused by the

84. Government of India (Home Department) to Secretary of State for India, 3 August 1942, *ibid*, p. 536.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 449. Also, Amery to Linlithgow, 24 July 1942, *ibid.*, p. 452, and Government of India (Home Department) to Secretary of State, 3 August 1942, *ibid*, p. 534.

87. Home Political File No. 3/12/42.

88. *Ibid.*, No. 4/7/43.

Congress action. He also said that the Congress demand could not be accepted because that would "completely disrupt the Governmental machinery in one of the most vital theatres of the war".⁸⁹

The Government of India divided its plan of dealing with the movement into three stages: (i) to avert, (ii) to abort, and (iii) to suppress. In the first stage, the Government would avoid taking action till the Bombay meeting (7 August 1942). The second stage would commence immediately after the ratification of the "Quit India" resolution by the AICC. At this stage, all the provincial Governments would proclaim the AICC and the Provincial Congress Committees as unlawful bodies under the Criminal Law Amendment Act. The Congress as a whole would not be declared illegal. Gandhi and members of the Congress Working Committee would be arrested simultaneously. The Government would denounce the Congress leadership in strong terms. The Provincial Governments would seize Congress Committee offices and funds, and arrest all provincial leaders and organizers of any importance. In the third stage, the whole Congress organization would be declared unlawful, and Emergency Powers Ordinance, 1940, promulgated.⁹⁰

Thus whether Gandhi "meant business" or not, the Government certainly did. Its plans were ready by 3 August 1942, full four days before the AICC meeting commenced in Bombay. A day before the "zero hour" (8 August 1942), the Government circulated a "strictly secret" memorandum to the provincial Governments. It was mentioned therein that the Government had acquired "a great deal of information, of varying degrees of reliability," about Gandhi's proposed movement. It was suspected that Gandhi was planning for a mass revolt. In that case it felt the necessity for immediate promulgation of the Emergency Powers

89. UK, Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, series 5, vol. 382, session 1942, cols 674-5.

90. Government of India (Home Department) to Secretary of State for India, 24 July 1942, Mansergh, n. 1, vol. 2, p. 449.

Ordinance 1940.⁹¹

This was the background of the swift and sharp action launched by the Government early in the morning of 9 August 1942, contrary to the expectation of the Congress leaders, who were in fact looking forward to fresh parleys with the Viceroy.

91. "Zero hour" was fixed at 5 A.M. on 9 August 1942. Home Political File No. 3/15/52.

3

THE MASS UPSURGE

ADDRESSING the All India Congress Committee meeting on 8 August 1942, Gandhi clearly told his audience : "...the usual struggle does not commence this moment. You have only placed your powers in my hands. I will now wait upon the Viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance of the Congress demand." It was expected that two to three weeks' time would be required to carry out negotiations with the Government.¹ Next morning, on 9 August, the Congress Working Committee was to discuss in detail Gandhi's proposed negotiations with the Government.

While Gandhi was thus trying to avert an immediate showdown with the Government, Linlithgow, was ready to pounce upon the Congress. The latter would not be deterred by Gandhi's proposed letter to him. For he anticipated that instead of making any meaningful negotiation possible, it would only forward the Quit India resolution and convey Gandhi's willingness to discuss matters, a willingness that meant little in view of the implacable attitude of the Congress. The Viceroy saw no sense in delaying arrests until he had received the letter and, meanwhile, the Working Committee had dispersed over India.²

On that very day (8 August 1942), the Government issued

1. *The Hindu* (Madras), 10 August 1942.
2. Linlithgow to Amery, 8 August 1942 ; Nicholas Mansergh, ed., *The Transfer of Power 1942-7*, Vol. 2 'Quit India' 30 April-21 September 1942 (London, 1971), p. 616.

an *Extraordinary Gazette Notification* in order to justify its planned action against the Congress. The notification described the Congress as "a totalitarian organization", and blamed its leaders for consistently impeding the growth of Indian nationhood.³ It was apparent that the Government was about to follow a policy of repression and terror to liquidate the whole Congress organization.

Rumours had reached Gandhi in Bombay that arrests of the Congress leaders were imminent. He was least bothered. On 9 August, he woke up as usual at four in the morning for his prayers. He then told his private secretary, Mahadev Desai : "After my last night's speech, they will never arrest me " He was about to proceed with his daily routine when he heard that the police had arrived with detention orders for him.⁴

Besides Gandhi, the Bombay Government rounded up, in the early hours of 9 August, all the members of the Congress High Command present in Bombay. This was soon followed by the arrest of "A" and "B" category of Congress leaders in various provinces.⁵ Hundreds of Congress leaders were clamped down. Overnight they became the security prisoners of the Government of India. Gandhi and his personal staff and close companions, such as his wife, private secretary, Sarojini Naidu, Meera Ben and Sushila Nayar were confined according to plan at the Aga Khan's Palace, Poona. Members of the Congress Working Committee were lodged in the Ahmednagar Fort. The only exception was Rajendra Prasad who, because of ill health, had not been able to go to Bombay. He, too, was arrested the same day in Patna, and lodged in the local prison. The Government did not disclose the whereabouts of the Congress leaders. They were not permitted to communicate even with their close relatives because "the preventive character of the Government action would be entirely defeated if such contacts were allowed."⁶ The Government also declared AICC, CWC and

3. *The Gazette of India, Extraordinary, 8 August 1942* (Home Department, Government of India, New Delhi).

4. D G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma* (Bombay, 1953), vol. 6, p. 216.

5. The Government had prepared a list of such leaders in every province as early as 1940. The list had been brought upto date recently.

6. Home Political File No. 3/21/42, National Archives of India, New Delhi. Richard Tottenham, Additional Home Secretary, had, however,

the Provincial Congress Committees as unlawful associations by exercising the power under section 16 of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908.⁷

The abrupt official action inaugurated the Quit India movement. It was, of course, not possible now for any one to organize a civil disobedience movement of the usual type, yet, acting under their local leaders, the people stood up in a massive protest against the Government's action. Just before his departure for prison, Gandhi had scribbled a note and given it to Pyarelal. These were his last instructions.

According to Tendulkar, the note said : "Let every non-violent soldier of freedom write out the slogan 'Do or Die' on a piece of paper or cloth, and stick it on his clothes, so that in case he died in the course of offering satyagraha, he might be distinguished by that sign from other elements who do not subscribe to non-violence."⁸ According to a Government report, the message was slightly different : "Every man is free to go to the fullest length under *Ahimsa* by complete deadlock, strikes and other non-violent means. Satyagrahis should go out to die and not to live. It is only when individuals go out to seek and face death that the nation will survive. *Kareng*

noted : "To shut down even this kind of communication might appear somewhat inhuman." The Viceroy's Executive Council, meeting on 19 August 1942, decided to allow Gandhi and his party and the CWC members to receive purely personal messages from their close relatives. They were also permitted to see newspapers including past issues.

7. The Government of India, *Gazette Notification*, 9 August 1942, Home Department, New Delhi.

8. Tendulkar, n. 4, p. 216.

But Pyarelal himself has denied that Gandhi gave any "last message" to him. His own view is : "This so-called last message, as a matter of fact, is only an assortment of pointers from Gandhiji's All India Congress Committee speeches on the 7th and 8th of August, 1942, as recapitulated by the present writer to groups of Congress workers who came to Birla House on the morning of 9th of August, 1942, and recorded by some of them." Pyarelal (Comp.), *Gandhiji's Correspondence with the Government 1942-44* (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1945), edn 2, p. xxv.

Ya Mareng (We shall do or die).'⁹ Whatever its text, the last message of Gandhi was a great source of inspiration to the multitudes who took part in the movement, regardless of whether they took recourse to non-violent or violent means.

Serious disturbances immediately broke out all over India. Bombay, being the venue of the AICC session and also of the arrest of most of the top Congress leaders, naturally exploded first. On the very first day (9 August 1942), crowds started throwing stones and soda water bottles at trains, buses and cars and at the police. Some buses were also burnt. Post offices were attacked and looted. The police opened fire on sixteen occasions, killing eight persons and injuring forty-four. Similar incidents occurred in Poona, Ahmedabad and in some suburban areas of Bombay. All these places observed *hartals*. Mills and factories were closed. The following day (10 August 1942), the crowds became more determined. On that day, police opened fire on twenty-six occasions, killing sixteen and injuring fifty-seven. In many places, crowds wanted to take out processions and made determined attempts at dislocating tram, bus and railway services. Europeans and government officials were molested. Even Indians in European dresses were not spared. Telephone and telegraph lines were cut; municipal and government properties were damaged. Barricades were put on the road.¹⁰

From 11 August disturbances spread to nearby areas like Kaira, Thana, Broach, Panch Mahals, Godhra, Surat, Ahmednagar, East Khandesh, Nasik, Satara, Belgaum, Dharwar, Ratnagiri, West Khandesh, Sholapur, Bijapur, Kanara and Kolaba. Incidents that occurred in these areas were almost identical in nature and character. Whatever the Bombay crowd did on 9 and 10 August was followed avidly by the people of these places. On 12 August, the crowd at Chinchani forced policemen to burn their uniforms and join the procession. There was an exodus of 6,000 to 8,000 mill workers from Ahmedabad. In many mills, workers themselves struck

9. *Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances, 1942-43* (New Delhi, Government of India, 1943), p. 74. The Government's version of Gandhi's message was based on the texts used in underground Congress bulletins.

10. Home Political File No. 3/15/43.

work. In Broach, the Gopal Mills had to be closed down because spinners refused to work. At Chaklashi (Kaira) a mob attacked the police station. Another mob attempted to burn down the Government dispensary and the post office at Chinchani (Thana). The *kacheri* at Palghar was attacked by a mob. One police Sub-Inspector was assaulted at Rakata. In all these places, police had to open fire to disperse the crowd. Attendance of students in the schools and colleges in different districts was very poor. It ranged between ten to thirty percent.

On 15 August, an attempt was made to set fire to a wooden door at the entrance to the General Post Office in Bombay. There were small fires in the warehouse of the Government Central Press and in the passage between the press and the stationery office. In Ahmedabad, the cloth markets and Zaveri Bazars continued to remain closed. The news of the death of Mahadev Desai on 15 August caused repercussions in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Poona, and Kaira on 16 August. In Ahmedabad police broke off the condolence meeting. *Hartals* were observed. Some students from Baroda came and distributed "Azad" leaflets to the people of Kaira. Police followed this batch of students and fired on them at Adas Station, killing four of them and injuring six. In Ahmednagar, on 21 August, a mob of 500 villagers assaulted a party of three policemen and detained them in a school. Later they were rescued. Everywhere attempts were made to take out processions and hold meetings. By 26 August all mills started working in Bombay, but in many of them workers still refrained from working.

In other parts of the province the movement was still in full swing. On 28 August several processions were taken out in Kaira district. At Chikhodra when police resorted to lathi charge, two hundred Patidar women rushed out armed with "dharias", "vansis" and sticks. Only with the help of the local people could the police pacify them. On 3 September, at Satara, a crowd of three thousand forced the Sub-judge to put on a Gandhi cap and join them in shouting slogans. The crowd then went to *kacheri* and forced the Mamlatdar to allow them to hoist the Congress flag there. At night they burnt the local inspection bungalow. On 9 September, police opened fire on a determined procession of students killing five and injuring ten at Nandurbar. On 10 September, a mob armed with swords,

daggers and other weapons attacked Government officers at Mahad in Kolaba districts. The unarmed policemen were beaten and when a small party of armed police came, they were deprived of a few muskets and ammunition. Later a reinforced party of police opened fire on the mob. The police accidentally killed one government official. From among the crowd, four persons were killed. By the middle of September the intensity of the mass upsurge subsided.¹¹

In Bihar, the situation took a serious turn after the police firing near the Secretariat building on 11 August. Thereafter, trouble spread from district to district and within a week extensive damage was done to railway tracks, railway stations and trains in North as well as South Bihar. A number of police stations were attacked, post and sub-registry offices looted, and attempts made to hoist the Congress flag on district and sub-divisional offices, buildings of local bodies and schools. *Hartals* and picketing of schools and law courts became common. Curfew was imposed in Patna and Arrah where the situation seemed serious.¹² Describing the situation in Bihar, its Governor, T. Stewart, wrote to the Viceroy¹³ :

Though [Patna] firing checked the attack the crowd went back in an ugly mood in the evening and through the night engaged in widespread sabotage and road obstruction, the thoroughness of which had to be seen to be believed. Telegraph poles complete with their full equipment of wires were pulled over and branches of trees a foot and over in diameter were chopped down. This was not the work of five minutes or an hour but nevertheless no information came into headquarters that this wholesale destruction was going on.

Indeed, events in Bihar took the form of a rebellion, spreading fast from urban to rural areas. By 12 August, Patna was completely cut off from the rest of India. On 13 August, at Futwah, two Royal Air Force Canadian officers were dragged out of a train and killed. Planes armed with machine guns were used on crowds dismantling railroad tracks and bridges at

11. *Ibid.*

12. Home Political File No. 3/22/42.

13. T. Stewart to Linlithgow, 22 August 1942, Mansergh, n. 2, p. 787.

Kajra. All official residences at Dehri-on-Sone were burnt by the mob on 14 August. At Bihta, on 15 August, "40 wagons of British troops' rations" were burnt. Railway traffic was completely dislocated. On 18 August, a military aircraft crashed at Narayanpur. According to the official report the surviving members of the crew were killed by the mob. On 19 August, the crowd even captured trains and drove them. On 3 September, the town police at Jamshedpur went on strike. On 4 September, prisoners of the Bhagalpur Central Jail murdered the D.S.P., the carding master and a warder. The armed police killed twenty-eight prisoners and wounded another eighty-seven of them. In Darbhanga district all police stations, except five, were attacked and looted. On 11 September, 5,000 copper miners went on strike at Mushabanai.

The people of Bihar had all sorts of weapons in their fight with the police. Generally they used their own indigenous weaponry which included spears, bows, arrows and other local products. After looting the police armoury, they used to handle police muskets, .303 rifles and shot guns and sometimes revolvers too. Spears and other weapons were being manufactured by village blacksmiths from fish plates and other pieces of metal taken from the railway lines. All classes of people took part in the movement : intellectuals, students, factory workers, miners, peasants, policemen, C class apprentices, and sweepers. Two hundred and five policemen defected. In October, the jail population in Bihar rose to 27,000.¹⁴ Violent mobs killed some military personnel at Saran, and some other Government and police officials at Sitamarhi (District Muzaffarpur), Minapore (District Muzaffarpur), Singhia (District Darbhanga) and Rapauli (District Purnea).¹⁵ During the heat of the movement, the Government had almost lost control over Patna, Arrah, Bhagalpur and Darbhanga districts. Communications were maintained only through aeroplanes.

In U.P., on 9 August itself, some processions, meetings and *hartals* took place. Big meetings were held at Banaras, Allahabad, Mathura and Meerut. The following day, students

14. Home Political File Nos. 18/8/42 to 18/11/42, Fortnightly reports, Bihar, August-November 1942. Also, *ibid.*, No. 3/30/42.

15. Home Political File No. 3/107/42.

attacked Government buildings. The Kanpur railway station booking office was attacked and looted. Young students were mostly active in these operations. On 11 August, about one hundred school boys were arrested at Etawah. Disturbances spread to Agra, Moradabad, Hapur, Lucknow, Meerut, Jaunpur, Mirzapur and Nainital. "Students continued to be the mainspring of the movement in all places". Cutting of communications and attacks on Government buildings and property increased in different areas of the province. The situation took a serious turn at Banaras and Allahabad on 12 August. In the morning the Allahabad *kacheri* was attacked by a mob headed by women. Police opened fire but four hundred determined students lay down in the *kacheri* garden. In the afternoon the Kotwali was attacked by a large crowd. In Eastern U.P., rural police stations, post offices and tehsils were attacked. Road communications were disrupted in the Ballia-Ghazipur area. "The centre of pressure now moved definitely into the country-side."

It was suspected that students from Banaras and agitators from Bihar were responsible for creating these troubles. On 13 August, the police and the mob clashed in the Mirzapur district. On 14 August, in Hardwar, students of the Gurukul and the Rishikul broke loose and with the help of *Mela* pilgrims took over the town for a short period, looting Rs 2,500 from a post office, burning the railway station buildings, invading police out-posts and destroying police uniforms. The Deputy Superintendent of Police was severely beaten; so was the Munshi of a Civil Defence Magistrate. In Azamgarh, Ghazipur, and Ballia, the villagers made some pre-planned attacks. At Madhuban, in Azamgarh district, the crowd and the police clashed for two hours on 15 August. "The rebel forces came up from three directions and then combined in due order to carry out the assault. They were armed with spears and lathis and were assisted by two elephants." Nevertheless, they were beaten off. "Unfortunately, in most places in the Eastern area, there was a rapid collapse of morale, police stations were captured and guns taken". In Meerut, a group of villagers blocked the road and attacked a police party. "In the disturbed area the rebels are everywhere accompanied by large crowds of villagers with an organizing core of students and agitators."

The Tehsil and Munsifi at Muhammadabad were burnt. "Meerut, looked like getting out of hand."

In some areas in U.P. and Bihar, from where the police had withdrawn, Congressmen set up their own machinery of Government, and in some places they even went to the extent of trying out cases and realizing fines and inflicting other punishments on the accused. Several *zamindars* were reported to have been asked to deposit their land revenue with the Congress organization and not to pay it to the Government.

The Government lost complete control over the District of Ballia for about ten days. Chittu Pande, the president of the District Congress Committee, became the *de facto* ruler there. The trouble started there on 14 August, when a passenger train flying the Congress flag, came to Ballia with students from Banaras. Next day the crowd went round the town, after hoisting Congress flags on the District Office, Civil Courts and Government High School, and attacked the railway station and post office. The District Magistrate was compelled to release the Congress leaders. Next day, the mob attacked the houses of some Government officials. On 20 August, the District Magistrate ordered the burning of currency notes worth rupees five lakhs in the treasury. On 22 August, the president of the District Congress Committee became the virtual dictator. The people then sacked the Tehsil and took away Rs. 15,000. All railway stations in the area were sacked and burnt. The eastern and southern portions of Azamgarh district also fell into the hands of mobs. Railway and Government properties were also destroyed.¹⁶

In the Central Provinces, there was no serious disturbance till 10 August 1942. There were, of course, *hartals*, processions and meetings. But after 10 August the situation rapidly deteriorated in Nagpur and the surrounding districts. The most affected districts were Nagpur, Wardha, Chanda, Bhandara and some parts of the Amaraoti district. In Nagpur disturbances began in the afternoon of 12 August when crowds went round the city destroying electric and telephone wires, attacking police out-posts and setting fire to Government

16. Home Political File Nos. 18/8/42 to 18/10/42, Fortnightly reports, U.P., August to September 1942.

property. A crowd was dispersed by police firing when it tried to attack the District and Civil Court buildings. "The disturbances soon spread throughout the city and during the night roads were barricaded, telegraph wires cut and a number of police outposts and other buildings burnt down."

On 13 August, railway communications were widely disrupted. All public buildings at Ramtek were burnt down. Five railway stations on the Nagpur-Chindwara narrow gauge were burnt. Traffic on this line was interrupted for several days. At Chimur, in the Chanda district, the Sub-divisional Magistrate, Circle Inspector of Police, Naib Tahsildar and one constable were murdered. One constable was speared and died subsequently. About ten forest depots were set on fire. Some unarmed policemen were individually beaten in the rural areas. "Some were humiliated by having their uniforms burnt and being compelled to wear Gandhi caps and carry Congress flags in processions." Several branch post offices were looted in different parts of the province.

Troubles spread to Betul district also. In Akola, the mill-hands took prominent part in dislocating communications. In the towns, the students were the most active elements. Within a few days about four thousand people were arrested. In police firings, altogether ninety-eight were killed and one hundred and sixty-eight wounded.¹⁷ On 7 September, a mob of about two hundred persons raided the G.I.P. and B.N. Railway booking offices. On the same night, a group of people attacked two small post offices at Saugar. On 8 September about three hundred women picketted the courts and made extensive damage to telegraph and telephone lines.

In some places 9 September was observed as "Independence day." Processions were taken out on that day. About fifty-four men and eleven women were arrested for defying the prohibitory orders. The number of arrests now reached 4,859. More than three hundred of these were whipped. The Government had to construct additional jails to accommodate political prisoners. Some prisoners in Nagpur, Jubbulpore, Bhandara, Betul and Wardha carried on agitation inside jails

17. Home Political File No. 18/8/42, Fortnightly report, C.P., August 1942.

also. About twenty prisoners went on mass hunger strike in Raipur jail. Others followed their example in different jails. There was widespread talk of police and military excesses including raping and looting at Chimur, Ashti and other places where troops were stationed.

In Madras disturbances broke out in different parts of the province from 11 August onwards. Telegraph and telephone lines were cut and railway stations attacked at a number of places. Some trains were also derailed. "In one instance a military train carrying munitions to Madras was derailed near Podanpur". Many railway stations were burnt down. Beginning at Guntur, these attacks spread to West Godavari, Ramnad, Madura and Tanjore districts. Schools and colleges were closed. Mills were on strike in the Coimbatore district. On 24 August some people attacked Sular aerodrome and set fire to twenty-two lorries. Three drivers were burnt to death. In the Ramnad district, the people followed a regular technique of felling trees across the roads, breaking culverts and cutting telegraph lines before they made an attack. Sabotage activities continued in Anantpur, East Godavari, Nellore, Tanjore and Cuddapah districts. On 20 September, a mob attacked the Kulasekharapatnam salt factory at midnight. The weighing shed was set on fire, and the Assistant Manager murdered. On 10 September, a crowd attacked the post office at Calingapatnam and looted the cash. Schools, colleges and law courts were picketted. Even women took part in these demonstrations. The chemistry laboratory of the Ceded District college, Anantpur, was gutted. Some thatched school sheds were set on fire at Karaikudi, Bellary and Pollachi. Many toddy shops were burnt. Mobs at Erode attempted to set the Deputy Collector's office on fire. On 16 September, at 2 A.M., a crowd of fifty to sixty men attacked and set on fire the Allur police station in the Nellore district. On the same day an attempt was made to set fire to the wooden sleepers on a railway bridge in the Ramnad district. On the night of 19 September, a wooden bridge was destroyed in the Nilgiris district. Salt was removed from a swamp in Ramnad district.¹⁸

18. Home Political File Nos. 18/8/42 to 18/9/42, Fortnightly reports, Madras, August to September 1942.

In Delhi, a *hartal* was observed on 9 August, and disturbances spread out the following day. In the Connaught Place the Lloyds Bank was attacked, and some window panes were damaged. Tramcars were stoned. "On the 11th August serious trouble started when a procession ordered to disperse in the Chandni Chowk became suddenly violent and the police were forced to open fire in self-defence." Thereafter ensued many incidents of sabotage causing considerable damage to Government and Municipal property. One Sub-Inspector of police was murdered by an angry mob, while the Deputy Commissioner and several police officers received minor injuries from brickbats and other missiles. In the early morning of 12 August, the Calcutta-Kalka mail was derailed. Rural Delhi was comparatively peaceful. Only in Narela some activities like picketting and *hartals* were observed.¹⁹

Schools, colleges and courts were picketted by students. Students of the Hindu and Ramjas Colleges were most active in sabotage activities. On 12 August, the students attacked an electric sub-station, an octroi post, a Warden's post and the Sarai Rohilla railway station ; they uprooted telegraph poles and destroyed telegraph wires. On the same day, a crowd burnt the electric sub-station in Paharganj. On 11 August a four-storied building known as the "Pili Kothi" was completely gutted and a Fire Brigade sub-station was burnt. The situation began to return to normal from 12 August.²⁰

In Bengal, school students were prominent in organizing a *hartal* on 9 August. Partial *hartal* was observed in many places. A number of processions and meetings were held in Calcutta, Dacca and many other places. Things took serious turn here only after 13 August. These were aimed principally at damaging or interrupting communications and essential services. Tramcars were interrupted. Attacks were made on post offices and post vans ; telephone and telegraph wires were cut ; street gas pillars were damaged : fire alarms were tampered with ; the distributing and feeder pillars of the Electric Supply Corporation were smashed ; and an electric sub-station was

19. Home Political File No. 18/8/42, Fortnightly report, Delhi, August 1942.

20. *Ibid.*

put out of action. Persons wearing European clothes were also molested.²¹

In Dacca, the Munsif's court, a police outpost and six post offices were attacked, and their records burnt. The first class carriage of a train was set on fire at Gandaria station. Outside Calcutta, there were attacks on post offices in the Burdwan, Murshidabad, Dacca, Faridpur, Bakarganj and Tippera districts. In Dacca, Burdwan and Khulna, mobs damaged court buildings. In two districts there was an attempted boycott of courts. There were one or two resignations from Municipalities. On 9 September, a crowd at Siliguri attempted to attack the police station upon which the police opened fire killing many people. Attacks on post offices and other government buildings also took place at Balurghat, Nadia,²² Hooghly, Rajshahi, Howrah and Noakhali. In Calcutta and elsewhere demonstrations by school and college students were frequent and continued for several weeks. Schools and colleges were closed by the Government from 14 September. Muslim students generally did not take part in demonstrations. On 19 September, a mob attacked the police station, post office and railway station at Burdwan, and caused considerable damage. On 28 September, the mob burnt the collector's office and irrigation buildings at Kalinagar, the Khasmahal office at Henria and the Sub-Registry office at Kajlagarh. On 19 September, a mob at Bhanga (Faridpur) murdered a Sub-Inspector and wounded two constables. At Nawabganj (Dacca), a constable was wounded. The mob at Jessore burnt down the Assistant Station Master's office. On 23 September, a group of Rajbansis, Polias and Santhals, armed with bows and arrows, attacked a police party at Dinajpur. The crowd snatched away two police muskets and some ammunition. In the police firing that followed three persons were killed and several wounded.²³

In Assam, where disturbances did not erupt immediately, it was mainly in the Nowgong district that some serious incidents of sabotage occurred in the second half of August

21. Home Political File Nos. 18/8/42, 18/9/42, Fortnightly reports, Bengal, August, September 1942.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

1942. Railway lines were dislocated, and portions of the track removed, on the night of 24 August, between Kampur and Jamunamukh, and at Puranigudam. On 25 August, a Captain of the Assam Rifles was assaulted for confiscating Congress flags. His jemadar was severely beaten. Railway and post offices were attacked and road bridges damaged at many places. The Kathiatali inspection bungalow, several excise shops, and the Raha circle offices were burnt. A mail van was looted near Goalpara. A military depot was burnt at Palasbari (Kamrup). At Sarbhog, on 28 and 29 August, the crowd burnt the Garrison Engineer's office, the post and telegraph office and an inspection bungalow. In Sylhet the crowd destroyed the furniture and records of the post office, Executive Engineer's office and Income Tax office. Later, similar disturbances spread to the Sibsagar district.²⁴

School and college students everywhere took active part in picketting, processions and *hartals*. On 18 September, at Berampur near Nowgong, a meeting attended by two thousand persons was fired upon and three persons were killed. On 20 September, a mob of two thousand attacked the Dhekiajuli police station (Dairang) and tried to hoist the Congress flag on it. Police resorted to firing, killing eight persons and injuring twelve. Among the dead were three women. About the same time a crowd of five thousand people that made an assault on the Gohpur police station was fired upon and two persons, including a girl, were killed. At Barpeta in the Kamrup district, some disturbances took place on 13 September. A pleader's house, a forest bungalow and some liquor shops were burnt.²⁵

In Orissa also serious disturbances occurred late, and these were in the Districts of Balasore, Cuttack and Koraput. In the Balasore district, a mob attacked an outlying police station, injured the police staff and set fire to the station house and to the officers' quarters. Later, they burnt the post office and damaged a road bridge. Telegraph and telephone wires were cut in several places. In the Kendrapara sub-division, post offices, canal revenue offices, and P.W.D. bungalows were burnt.

24. Home Political File Nos 18/8/42, 18/9/42, Fortnightly reports, Assam, August, September 1942.

25. *Ibid.*

Armed with lathis, a crowd of three thousand attacked a police party on 26 August. Police opened fire and one person was killed. In the Angul sub-division, a group of people attacked a police party, rescued the arrested Congress leaders, and injured the magistrate and some policemen.²⁶

In the Koraput district markets were raided, liquor shops, police stations and road bridges damaged, and telegraph wires cut. The tribal people here took active part in the demonstrations. The District Magistrate of Koraput believed that the movement in that district was a deliberate attempt at a pre-planned violent revolution. On 6 September, a mob in Cuttack burnt a police barrack, the records of a police station, a post office, a rest shed, a revenue office and a tehsil office. In Balasore district, a crowd, about four to five thousand strong, clashed with a police party at Dhamnagar; in the resultant firing eight persons were killed and seven injured. In another incident on 28 September, police opened fire on a mob that was attacking the Basudebpur police station at Eram. Twenty-five people were killed in this firing.²⁷

In Punjab disturbances took place in Lahore, Amritsar, Ludhiana, Sargodha, Lyallpur, Multan, Gurgaon and Rawalpindi. Partial *hartal* was observed in some towns. Telephone wires were cut in two or three places, four postal letter boxes were damaged and minor damage was done to a railway booking office. In Sargodha, a crowd of two thousand persons attacked a police party with brickbats. On 13 August, some two hundred students damaged street lamps and invaded the Municipal office and a local railway agency. Police in Multan pushed some students into a pond; as a result, three of them were drowned.²⁸

Though the people of Sind and North-West Frontier Province resented the arrest of Gandhi and the other Congress leaders, no serious incident took place there.

The Quit India movement was not confined to British India alone. It made deep inroads into different princely states, and inspired the people there to make their contribution to the cause

26. Home Political File Nos 18/8/42, 18/9/42, Fortnightly reports, Orissa, August, September 1942.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Home Political File Nos. 18/8/42, 18/9/42, Fortnightly reports, Punjab, August, September 1942.

of India's independence. For the purpose a number of Praja Mandals were organised. The Quit India movement was more intensive in Saurashtra, Ujjain, Gwalior, Kotah, Rajputana, Mysore, Baroda and Kashmir. In Kashmir, the Government Silk Weaving Factory was burnt. In Mysore, the Bhadrawati Steel Works, the Kolar Gold Fields and the Hindustan Aircraft Factory (Bangalore) were on strike for a long period; the Harihar railway line was completely dislocated. These activities considerably damaged the property of the Government of India in the princely states.²⁹

It was natural that British Residents should perform a significant role in quelling the active sympathetic response that the moment had evoked in the Indian States. Troops from British India were lent to take care of the disturbances in these areas. Some of the princes, acting on the advice of the residents, declared the Praja Mandals as unlawful, and arrested and detained all the important leaders of these bodies. Mobs were fired upon at many places. At Talchar, in Orissa, an aircraft was used to machine-gun the crowd.³⁰

II

An examination of the main incidents which took place in course of the mass upsurge in August-September 1942 makes it clear that the communication system, viz., railways and posts and telegraphs, received special attention of the people. There was a belief that by disrupting the communication network the people could capture a few isolated tehsils and thanas as a first step towards the occupation of the district headquarters. Attacks on communication lines were also intended to hamper the Allied war-effort and thus bring pressure on the British Government. That there was method in the widespread destruction of the communication network would suggest that apart from realising the tactical importance of such activities, the saboteurs also possessed sufficient technical knowledge. In fact, they used special instruments, viz., wire-cutters to cut telegraph wires,

29. Home Political File No. 3/89/42.

30. *Ibid.*

spanners to remove fishplates and fishbolts from railway lines.³¹

In the first week of August 1942, all the railways suffered more or less. Shortage of coal also considerably reduced the number of running trains. In Eastern U.P. and Bihar trains could run only during day time under the protection of military convoys. The whole of Eastern Railway was badly affected. Damage to railway property was estimated in the neighbourhood of a crore of rupees.³² Only after the deployment of troops could the safety and security of the railway tracks be ensured.

As regards postal and telegraphic communications, the worst affected areas were Bihar, Eastern U.P., Eastern Bengal, Northern Assam, Wardha, Chanda, Amaraoti and Akola districts in the Central Provinces, Bezwada, Guntur, Ramnad and Madura districts in Madras; and the cities of Poona and Bombay. Five hundred and fifty-three post offices were attacked, of which twenty-eight were completely burnt. Two hundred and eighteen post offices were temporarily closed down. All the communication lines connected with Patna were completely cut off; only through military wireless communication system could the officials at Patna maintain contact with the rest of India.³³

In case of post offices, the mobs first entered and took out the furniture, forms and records, and made a bonfire of them in front of the offices. In some cases, the telegraph and other instruments were smashed, and in a few cases, the cash, stamps and other valuable articles were looted. No harm was usually done to the staff working in the offices. A number of letter boxes fixed in public places were removed or damaged and sometimes acid or other burning materials were thrown inside them. In many cases, mail-runners and mail buses were attacked and looted. Wire-cutting (telephone and telegraph) seemed to be a popular pastime. The posts were pulled down and cable junction boxes burnt. Only Punjab, Sind, N.W.F.P., Rajputana and Central India were free from these troubles.³⁴

Besides the communication systems, people also attacked sixty-five police stations, of which forty were completely burnt.

31. Home Political File Nos 3/26/42 and 18/10/42, Fortnightly report, C.P., October 1942.

32. Home Political File No. 3/16/42.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*

They also attacked and destroyed fifty-five other public buildings.³⁵ There were attempts in most of the places to hoist the Congress flag on public offices like the Secretariate, courts and police stations. Sometimes these attempts resulted in police-mob scuffles and firings. Quite a large number of Government buildings, inspection bungalows, court buildings, etc. were destroyed by the mob. There were attempts at many places to break open the jails. Some attempts were made in the industrial towns to disrupt the electric supply lines by such methods as uprooting distribution pillars and pulling down pylon towers.³⁶

Bombs were frequently used during this time, particularly in Bombay, C.P. and Bengal. Crude country-made bombs were made in cigarette tin containers, in brass lotas, coconut-shells and the like. The bombs contained steel ball-bearings, sharpnel, bullets, gramophone pins and pieces of glass and china. Many people died in the process of manufacturing them. The mob also used to throw at the police electric bulbs filled with acid. Dacoities for political purposes, too, became common.

The chief industrial centres of the country played a significant part in the Quit India movement. A unique feature of the movement in these centres was the co-operation between the management and labour. When the movement started, the Ahmedabad group of mill-owners took the lead and closed their factories for an indefinite period. Soon their example was followed by others in different places. The Government suspected that strikes in mills and factories were being engineered by G D Birla³⁷; in Calcutta and Jalpaiguri Marwari businessmen in general were suspected to be in sympathy with the

35. Home Political File No. 6/13/42.

36. Home Political File No. 3/33/42.

37. Home Political File No. 3/16/42.

According to a Government Intelligence Report, J.K. Birla on the eve of the Quit India movement was attempting to approach the Maharaja of Nepal with a request to send a note to the British Government to the effect that the terms of the Anglo-Nepalese treaty precluded the use of Nepalese soldiers in maintaining internal order in India and asking for an assurance that they would not be used for that purpose. Home Political File No. 3/107/42.

movement.³⁸ The general belief in the official circles was that the management paid salaries to the labour in advance and resorted to lock-outs in the plants. There were underground cells working in the Engineering industrial units with a view to bringing the maximum pressure on the Government by adversely affecting the war effort.³⁹

Strikes in the cities and the suburban areas were initially quite successful. Business was suspected for a prolonged period by Hindu shop-keepers. In the factories and the mills, the labourers were also eager to co-operate with the management. For long, Gandhi had been treated as a prophet by the Indian labour world. It was widely rumoured that Gandhi had prophesied the attainment of independence by India within two months. The Congress-oriented trade unions used the rumour to bring labour force behind them.⁴⁰ The idea behind the strikes was to sabotage the war effort by disrupting the supply of vital productions without destroying industrial plants. Besides, the Congress issued a call for economic boycott against the Government officials.⁴¹ In Bombay, it was reported that traders were forced to open their shops by the Government but the buyers and sellers were both reluctant to carry out transactions. It seemed a shadow committee of the Congress was operating through the agency of volunteers.⁴² Possibly this happened in other areas also.

One remarkable feature of the strikes was that nowhere were these accompanied by looting or arson. Hooligans and mischief-mongers were not allowed to take an upper hand. The houses of mahajans, landlords and other big merchants were not attacked.⁴³ Labour and management were united on the issue of strike.

The following were the more important strikes that considerably affected the Government of India's war production :

38. Home Political File No. 3/34/42.

39. Home Political File No. 3/26/42.

40. Home Political File No. 18/9/42, Fortnightly report, Bombay, September 1942.

41. *Ibid.*

42. Sir Cowasjee Jahangir's speech at the National Defence Council meeting, 8 September 1942, Home Political File No. 13/26/42.

43. Home Political File No. 3/34/42.

1. The Cotton Textile Mills of Bombay and Ahmedabad. The Ahmedabad mills were on strike for about 10 days.
2. The General Motors of Bombay (from 10 August to 2 September 1942).
3. Lever Brothers (from 10 August to 2 September 1942).
4. Tata Iron and Steel Company, Jamshedpur (from 21 August to 3 September 1942).
5. Hindustan Aircraft Manufacturing Company, Bangalore (4-5 days).
6. Birla Jute Mills (one week).
7. The Cotton and Textile Mills of Coimbatore (13 to 18 August, and 24 to 31 August 1942).
8. Cotton Textile Mills, Delhi (10 August to 9 September 1942).
9. I.G.N. & Railway Company's Dockyard, Garden Reach, Calcutta.
10. Buckingham & Carnatic Mills, Madras.⁴⁴

Besides these, the Mysore Iron and Steel Works, Calcutta Port Trust, the Calcutta Tramways, seven engineering concerns of Calcutta, one ordnance factory, the Cordite factory at Aravankadu, flour mills in Delhi, the Indian Cable Company, and the East India Railway Workshop were on strike for quite a long period.⁴⁵

The Government was particularly disturbed by the long strike in the Tata factories. Linlithgow in a secret letter to Amery, wrote on 22 August 1942 : "In some ways the most disturbing a development is the openly declared political strike in the Tata factories—and the serious interruption of vital war industries which this involves and to which for obvious reasons we have done our best to deny publicity."⁴⁶

The strike in the Tata factories according to official intelligence, was instigated by the foremen and the supervisory staff who numbered about four hundred. Also, A.R. Dalal, a Director, and Jahangir Ghandy, the General Manager, were in

44. Home Political File No. 3/26/42.

45. Home Political File No. 3/33/42.

46. Home Political File No. 3/16/42.

favour of the strike.⁴⁷ The Tatas were engaged in the production of war munitions. There was a loss of about 100,000 tons of steel and 15,000 gallons of Toluene.⁴⁸ Annual loss of production was about 10 percent. It had general repercussions on all steel projects.⁴⁹

The strikes in the textile industries also adversely affected the Government's war-effort. The Buckingham and Carnatic Mills of Madras were engaged in the production of khaki drill. The total loss of production was two and a half crore yards. The stoppage of the Calico mills and Messrs Hathi Singh & Co. caused much difficulties to other mills because they were the chief producers of sowing cotton. The total loss of production was estimated at about 25 million running yards.⁵⁰

The youth, both educated and uneducated, played a leading role in the mass upsurge. The 1942 movement was, indeed, a movement of the youth. They took the arrest of the top Congress leaders as a national affront. The youth accepted the challenge. Soon they were in command everywhere.

The Chief Secretary of Bombay reported : "The student class was particularly in the forefront and in fact was the most troublesome element in cities."⁵¹ In U.P. "the disturbances were in almost all cases started as a result of the activities of school boys and students."⁵² The Chief Secretary of Madras said : "In some districts students were very prominent in the part they played." He added that students and unemployed young men were active everywhere. Students in particular took a leading part during the earlier stages of the disturbances.⁵³ In the Central Provinces, "on the whole, the younger generation was more in evidence and it is to this class that persons work-

47. Home Political File No. 140/42

48. Home Political File No. 3/33/42.

49. Home Political File No. 3/16/42

50. *Ibid*

51. Chief Secretary (Bombay) to Home Secretary Government of India, 9 September 1942, Home Political File No. 3/34/42.

52. Chief Secretary (U.P.) to Home Secretary, Government of India, 26 October 1942, *ibid*.

53. Chief Secretary (Madras) to Home Secretary, Government of India, 26 October 1942, *ibid*.

ing behind the scenes directed their attention."⁴⁴ The Bihar Chief Secretary wrote in a similar vein: "Students were very prominent especially in the early stages and were much to the fore in organizing and carrying out sabotage."⁵⁵ From Bengal the official report was that "generally speaking disturbances were created by students and school boys who are always susceptible to unruly influences."⁵⁶ In Orissa, the students of the Ravenshaw College in Cuttack took a leading part in the demonstrations.⁵⁷ In Delhi, as has been noted, the students of the Ramjas and Hindu Colleges led the sabotage activities.⁵⁸ In Assam students were active in the Nowgong, Darrang, North Kamrup and South Goalpara districts.⁵⁹ "Activity in connection with the Civil Disobedience Movement" in Sind was officially reported to have "been confined almost entirely to the larger towns" where it was "carried on in the main by students and school children of the Hindu community."⁶⁰

The Banaras Hindu University, especially, became the storm centre of rebellious activities, and from here were organised rebel operations in Eastern India, particularly Eastern U.P. and Southern Bihar. The University even closed its gates to the District Magistrate and declared itself as the headquarters of Free India. Its University Training Corps was turned into "Indian National Army" under the command of Dr. Kaushalya Nand Gairola, a member of the staff. So effective were the planning, strategy and organization of the Banaras students that the University began to be looked upon by the Government as "a focus of sabotage and railway dacoity

54. Chief Secretary (C.P.) to Home Secretary, Government of India, 2 November 1942, *ibid.*

55. Chief Secretary (Bihar) to Home Secretary, Government of India, 17 September 1942, *ibid.*

56. Chief Secretary (Bengal) to Home Secretary, Government of India, 12 November 1942, *ibid.*

57. Chief Secretary (Orissa) to Home Secretary, Government of India, 11 November 1942, *ibid.*

58. Chief Secretary (Delhi) to Home Secretary, Government of India, 16 September 1942, *ibid.*

59. Chief Secretary (Assam) to Home Secretary, Government of India, 16 September 1942, *ibid.*

60. Chief Secretary (Sind) to Home Secretary, Government of India, 9 September 1942, *ibid.*

organization.”⁶¹ It was consequently closed down *sine die*, and the students were asked to leave the campus which was occupied by the army on 19 August. The students who thus got scattered helped and guided people in different areas in sabotage activities.⁶²

“It was from this base that parties of students sallied forth and organized sabotage in the whole surrounding area.” A delegation from the Banaras university visited the Allahabad university on 12 August 1942. The Allahabad students immediately flared up and attacked the Kotwali. Even the girl students took part in these demonstrations.⁶³ Later on the students, in collaboration with the Congress *Mandals*, became more active in the area east of Fyzabad and Allahabad. Some elements belonging to the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army also helped the students. After some time, the Lucknow and the Agra students followed suit.⁶⁴ Linlithgow succinctly described the situation to Amery⁶⁵ :

61. Viceroy to Secretary of State, 17 August 1942, Home Political File No. 3/16/42.
62. Home Political File Nos. 3/26/42 and 18/10/42, Fortnightly report, U.P., October 1942. To penalize the Banaras University authorities, the Government of India was considering the proposal to take over the university buildings (B.H.U.) for use as a military hospital and to withhold the second instalment of the Central Government's grant for the year 1942-43. However, these plans were not executed. The University authorities, of course, received a warning from the Government that “future grants would be withheld if they admitted without adequate guarantee of satisfactory behaviour, students who had taken part in unauthorized political activities or permitted within the precincts of the University any propaganda subversive of the authority of Government.” Linlithgow believed that S. Radhakrishnan, the Vice-Chancellor, had no control over the students. Home Political File No. 3/6/43.
63. Home Political File Nos 3/26/42 and 18/10/42, Fortnightly report, U.P., October 1942.
64. Home Political File Nos. 18/9/42, 18/10/42, 18/11/42, Fortnightly reports, U.P., September, October, November 1942.
In all, 134 students were externed from the Banaras district. These students came from different parts of India, such as, Delhi, Punjab, Bihar, Assam, Madras, U.P. and various princely states. Home Political File No. 22/47/44.
65. Governor General to Secretary of State, 22 August 1942, Home Political File No. 3/16/42.

In all the disturbances students have been prominent and, as a particular example, the Benaras University has been working as an organizing centre. In this last fact we should ourselves be inclined at present to see that main key to the situation. The volume of revolutionary propaganda spread throughout the country by communist and other organizations combined with the nationalist and anti-British preachings of Congress has had a cumulative effect on the educated and impressionable youth of the country. To the younger generation the 'non-violent non-co-operation' of Gandhi has never made a really strong appeal. Either they have deliberately seized control and exceeded the instructions of Congress, or the Congress leaders may themselves have instigated and subsidised a revolt the violence of which may have gone beyond their expectations, or there may have been more sinister forces at work. What matters for the moment is that youth is in command and has been putting into execution a revolutionary programme which could hardly have sprung into existence at a moment's notice !

III

Contrary to what the Viceroy thought, the "revolutionary programme" had, indeed, "sprung into existence at a moment's notice." The programme generally followed all over the country had not been formally drawn up by any group either before or immediately after the momentous AICC meeting in Bombay. A group of junior Congress leaders, who had escaped arrest, did meet immediately after the rounding up of the top Congress leaders ; they drew up a twelve-point programme of action in the name of the AICC. This included a country-wide *hartal*, manufacture of salt in defiance of law, and non-co-operation with Government on as wide a scale as possible. It appealed to various sections of the people like students, government servants, soldiers, women, and people in the princely states to make their contribution to the struggle. But there was no mention of attack on communications, police stations and the like.

The Government of India published a brochure the title of which, *Congress Responsibility For The Disturbances 1942-43*,

clearly indicated its purpose. In spite of being heavily documented, it could refer to but one pre-8 August document which mentioned the destruction of telegraph and telephone lines. This was the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee circular of 29 July which has been discussed earlier.⁶⁶ It is, of course, possible to argue, on the basis of this circular, that the demolition of communication lines had come up for discussion among some top Congress leaders. Yet, it is clear that no programme had been finalised by the Congress High Command by 8 August 1942, and also that no central circular on the lines of the Andhra Congress circular had been issued. However, when the movement broke out, people followed a more or less common programme, which included attack on telegraph and telephone lines, police stations and government property in general.

There is no doubt that the need for such activities was stressed in many circulars and broadcasts issued by the junior Congress leaders, including the Socialists, who had gone underground after the arrest of the top leaders. It is this which led Achyut Patvardhan and Aruna Asaf Ali to question the retrospective claim of the Congress Working Committee that the 1942 upsurge had been spontaneous ; rather it had been guided and organized by these underground leaders. Referring to their own work, Patvardhan and Aruna described the organisation and leadership provided by underground leaders in Bombay. Necessary directions were conveyed to thousands of Congress workers and others who were still out of jail, and anxious to implement the resolution of 8th August 1942. Their authority for assuming such responsibility was never questioned and they received the unstinted support of large sections of their people. The initial response of the people to the Congress call to act as free men was, indeed, spontaneous and miraculous. But once they had set out on the path of revolt, they clamoured for effective guidance.⁶⁷

Certainly the underground leaders played an important part in continuing the movement in some form or the other

66. Andhra Provincial Congress Committee's circular, 29 July 1942. *Congress Responsibility*, n. 9, pp. 55-6.

67. Achyut Patvardhan and Aruna Asaf Ali's open letter to the President, Indian National Congress, 7 January 1946, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta), 18 January 1946.

beyond September, 1942.⁶⁸ However, the mere fact that they issued circulars and made broadcasts outlining the programme which was actually followed does not prove that it was from them that the people had received that programme in the stormy days of August-September 1942. It is extremely unlikely that these circulars and broadcasts could have reached all parts of the country within two or three days of the arrest of the top leaders. For by then the upsurge had already assumed a definite shape. In fact, describing the situation in August 1942, Achyut Patvardhan himself wrote in his underground paper, *Ninth August*, on 26 January 1944: "The emotional tempo was there but the strength was not yet organized and could not be directed into definite channels."⁶⁹ Even more emphatic on this point was Jayaprakash Narayan who, after his escape from prison at the end of 1942, analysed the causes of the suppression of the movement, and wrote that *there was no efficient organization* of the national Revolutionary forces that could function and give effective lead to the mighty forces that were released." A great organization, the Congress, however, was not tuned to the pitch to which the Revolution was to rise. Such was the lack of organization that even important Congressmen were not aware of the progress of events and it remained a matter of debate in many Congress quarters whether the work of the people was really in accordance with the Congress programme.⁷⁰

Rajendra Prasad's testimony is emphatic. No person or group of persons, according to him, can be given the credit for spreading the ideas which led to the adoption of a certain programme by the people all over the country during August-September 1942. The credit should go to the Government of India and to Amery. While on 9 August the newspapers had published the Congress resolution of August 8, the Government had issued a *communique* seeking to explain the reasons for its arrest of Gandhi and members of the Congress Working Committee. That *communique* alleged that destruction of the means of communications like Posts and Telegraphs and the railways formed a part of Congress programme. On 10 August

68. This has been discussed in detail in the next chapter.

69. File No. G. 55, 1946, AICC, Nehru Memorial Museum, New Delhi.

70. Jayaprakash Narayan, "To All Fighters For Freedom," *Congress Responsibility*, n. 9, p. 70 (emphasis in the original).

1942, in a speech, broadcast from London and published in all Indian newspapers, Amery repeated the alleged programme of the Congress. As the Congress had issued no programme, the people got the impression from these reports that an attack on communications must have been included in the Congress programme and started acting on that presumption⁷¹

The confidence with which Amery spoke made his contention about the Congress plan of action all the more credible. He said⁷² :

The real concern is not the demand, which cannot be taken seriously, but the action which the Congress is resolved upon and for which preparation has been for sometime in progress. This includes the fomenting of strikes in industry, commerce, administration, law courts, schools and colleges, interruption of traffic and public utility services, cutting of telegraph and telephone wires and picketting of troops and recruiting stations... The success of the proposed campaign would paralyse India's entire war effort by stopping the flow of munitions, the construction of aerodromes and actually immobilizing the army.

That Amery had the Andhra Congress circular in mind is borne out by his telegram of 25 September 1942 to Linlithgow⁷³ :

"In replying a question in Parliament on September 11th I undertook to consult you on question of publication of documents purporting to be instructions for carrying out of a civil disobedience campaign. I referred in my reply to ANDHRA circular and said that it must rest with you to decide how much of the material in your possession is suitable for publication."⁷⁴

Amery thus became the chief instrument in broadcasting the supposed Congress programme of action. What he said was avidly believed by the people. It seemed so plausible, being in tune with the prevailing atmosphere in the country and with the type of things which the Congress leaders, Gandhi

71. Rajendra Prasad, *A biography* (Bombay, 1957), p. 549.

72. L. S. Amery's broadcast speech in London, 9 August 1942, *The Hindu*, 11 August 1942.

73. Secretary of State to Viceroy, 26 September, 1942 Home Political File No. 3/31/42.

included, had freely talked about. It has been, for instance, repeatedly asserted that, different from the earlier movements, the coming movement would be short and swift. Jail going, moreover, would not be its chief characteristic, and within the broad framework of non-violence people would be free to adopt necessary steps. It had been further declared that the movement would really be an open rebellion, and people had been given a radical watch-word, "do or die." Excitement was widespread and waring. At such a moment the authorities not only spurred the people into activity but also provided them with guidelines for action.

There was no central organization to direct the movement. The junior Congress leaders who had got together in Bombay on 9 August and prepared the twelve-point programme, of course, tried to transmit it to all parts of the country. They functioned in the name of the AICC and issued circulars and appeals from time to time. It cannot, however, be said that the mass upsurge in various parts of the country grew under their direction. There were also no provincial organizations worth the name during those early days. As Linlithgow assessed the situation within ten days of the outbreak of the disturbances⁷⁴ :

Taking the country as a whole the disturbances, though evidently planned by a common source, do not appear now to be coordinated by any single centre and are sporadic in incidence. I have not much doubt that desire of students to initiate subversive or destructive activities of students in other provinces of which they became aware, and anxiety of hooligan elements to turn so good an opportunity to profit, are responsible for a good deal, helped no doubt in certain areas by plans being worked out, or already in existence and implemented by Congress support.

In fact, there was no lack of organization, but such organization was of a purely *ad hoc* and local character. In every area new leaders emerged from among the youth. This was clearly acknowledged by the Government⁷⁵ :

We have at the moment no information to suggest that there is any central All India leadership of the present

74. Linlithgow to Amery, 16 August 1942, Mansergh, n. 2, p. 731.

75. Home Political File No. 3/31/42.

Congress movement. The sporadic nature of the outbreaks in different parts of the country suggests that no central organization at present exists. The 12-point programme purporting to have been issued by the rump All India Congress Committee from Bombay after the arrest of the main leaders, the farewell instructions alleged to have been issued by Gandhi and Azad and the previous statements of Congress leaders in press and on platform all tend to confirm this impression.

The intelligence authorities saw no master mind behind the disturbances, and attributed them largely to the cumulative effect of the anti-British agitation, which had been deliberately intensified by Congress leaders since the failure of the Cripps Mission. The activities of such organizations as the Congress Socialist Party, Forward Bloc and other extreme revolutionary parties who are always ready to fish in troubled waters had also contributed to this situation.⁷⁶

The Viceroy in a telegram to the Secretary of State dated 3 October 1942, affirmed : "We feel valid distinction can be made between Congress responsibility for and Congress organization of disturbances. Former is undeniable but latter is true to only limited extent. Many who deny Congress responsibility are in reality denying only Congress organization."⁷⁷

It is, however, ironical that the Viceroy himself forgot the distinction between "responsibility" and "organization" and said later in the same telegram⁷⁸ :

It is commonly said by those who would absolve Congress of responsibility that disturbances were spontaneous outbursts arising from arrest of Congress leaders. Disturbances, however, clearly lacked main features of spontaneity. Thus they occurred mainly in strategic areas ; they began simultaneously with similar objectives in widely separated areas not on day of arrests but two or three days later ; objects of attack were mainly essential communications and Government property with on the whole notable absence of looting of private property which

76 Home Political File No 3/31/42.

77. Home Political File No. 3/31/42.

78. *Ibid.*

is of particular significance in view of large criminal element involved, many acts, particularly sabotage of railways and roads, displayed technical knowledge and those concerned must have been provided with necessary tools ; there was marked absence of sabotage of valuable machinery and plant in factories even where strikes occurred ; finally absence of communal trouble must be put down largely to disciplined abstention from interference with Muslims.

What the Viceroy says here has relevance neither to the question of responsibility nor to that of organization. As has already been explained above, the common features of the movement in various parts of the country were not due to any central planning or organization, but were the cumulative result of the tension and excitement which had grown during the preceding months as well as the people's understanding of the nature of the supposed Congress programme, because of Amery's vain bid to malign the Congress leaders.

IV

The absence of a central organization behind the movement, having branches in all parts of the country, made the task of the Government in suppressing it less difficult than it would otherwise have been. Even so it was by no means easy and the Government soon realized this. In the beginning, of course, the authorities tended to belittle the mass upsurge. On 11 August 1942, Linlithgow informed Amery that but for a rash of sporadic disorder of varying degrees of seriousness, the situation was not too bad. Although, the police and the executive authorities in the provinces had to bear considerable strain, there "was nothing of great importance."⁷⁹

A couple of days later the Viceroy reassured Amery that the situation throughout the country was well in hand. The students, though, continued to give trouble in various places, and industrial areas like Lucknow, Kanpur, Bombay, Nagpur and Ahmedabad, betrayed signs of strain due partly to the

79. Linlithgow to Amery, 11 August 1942, Mansergh, n. 2, vol. 2, p. 662.

“local hooligans” and partly to the presence of large number of mill-hands on strike.⁸⁰

Within a week, however, the Viceroy had to report that the situation was serious, especially in Bihar. Bhagalpur was reported to be out of hand, and conditions in the north of the Ganges were grave. Only through air flights were communications maintained in the worse affected areas.⁸¹ Again on 24 August, he accepted Hallet’s description of “this movement, in certain parts of the country at any rate, as a rebellion.”⁸² By 31 August, Linlithgow was comparing the uprising with the movement of 1857⁸³:

I am engaged here in meeting by far the most serious rebellion since that of 1857, the gravity and extent of which we have so far concealed from the world for reasons of military security. Moh violence remains rampant over large tracts of the countryside and I am by no means confident that we may not see in September a formidable attempt to renew this widespread sabotage of our war effort. The lines of Europeans in outlying places are to-day in jeopardy. If we bungle this business we shall damage India irretrievably as a base for future allied operations and as a thoroughfare for U S. help to China.

The Government did not “bungle”. Requisite force was employed to suppress the upsurge. Firing was frequently resorted to. According to the incomplete statistics available to the Government on 15 September, three hundred and forty persons had been killed and eight hundred and fifty injured as a result of police firings. A large number of policemen had also been injured and thirty-one were reported to have been killed by the insurgents. The army was extensively used. The troops were called out in no less than sixty places, while on a number of occasions they stood by. They were widely used for guard and protection duties. The troops, too, were ordered to open fire on many occasions. The reported figures of casualties thus caused were 318 killed and 153 wounded ; military casualties being 11 killed and 7 wounded. The Air Force was also used,

80. Linlithgow to Amery, 13 August 1942, *ibid.*, pp. 682-3.

81. Linlithgow to Amery, 19 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 754.

82. Linlithgow to Amery, 24 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 808.

83. Linlithgow to Amery, 31 August 1942, *ibid.*, pp. 853-4.

particularly for reconnaissance and patrol. Besides, "on one or two occasions after warnings had no effect, air-craft opened fire on mobs actually engaged in destroying the railway line ; but there was no bombing whatever."⁸⁴

A number of Ordinances were specially promulgated to deal with the movement. The Penalties (Enhancement) Ordinance, 1942 provided for the imposition of increased penalties in respect of a wide range of offences against property, the person and the public peace. It rendered sabotage punishable with whipping or death.⁸⁵ The Special Criminal Courts Ordinance was intended to expedite the trial of saboteurs and provide a chance for reviewing the cases already tried in the subordinate courts.

The Government of India, in a communication to provincial Governments on 27 August 1942, asked them to use provisions of chapter IV of the Criminal Procedure Code and particularly section 42 thereof, whereby every member of the public was bound to give information relating to sabotage etc. to the local authorities. By exercising the powers of Defence of India Rule, 59A, the Government could employ all persons who were above sixteen and below fifty, living within one mile for the protection of railway, telephone and telegraph lines. In the same way, persons living within three miles would be responsible for the protection of Tehsil headquarters, police stations or other Government property. The provincial Governments were also asked to direct their subordinates that they should open fire immediately without hesitation and without giving any warning to any person or persons engaged in acts of sabotage.⁸⁶ The provincial Governments at their levels assured the police that there would be no future enquiry into their activities.

As the use of the army for controlling the disturbances became a regular feature, the Government passed the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Ordinance, 1942, empowering an officer

84. India, *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Official report, vol. 3, session 1942, cols. 141-6.

The troops deployed comprised about fifty-seven and half battalions (equivalent to more than eight brigades.) Home Political File No. 3/89/42.

85. Home Political File No. 3/26/42.

86. Home Political File No. 3/28/42.

of the rank of captain and above to arrest a person and use as much force as might be necessary even to the extent of causing death. The person thus arrested was to be surrendered to the nearest police station. The military officer, however, could not prosecute or carry out legal proceedings.

The Viceroy even permitted, as early as 15 August, the machine gunning of saboteurs from air. Naturally it was decided that such actions would not be published.⁸⁷

In order to prevent the recurrence of attacks on lines of communication, the Government imposed collective fines on the inhabitants of certain areas. The Viceroy believed that in the existing circumstances collective fines would provide a potent deterrent.⁸⁸ He directed the provincial Governors that "there should if possible be no remission of collective fines and that fines that have been imposed should be collected with utmost energy." He rebuked the Governors of Bihar and U.P. for granting remissions to some localities and reminded them that the imposition of collective fines was an effective method of keeping up pressure on the Congress and its supporters.⁸⁹

Some provincial Governments went a step further and, for their own convenience, imposed the whole burden of fine on firms, companies, landlords, merchants, employers, or owners of property on the ground that their employees and tenants were involved in the disturbances. The justice, equity or the expediency of such a method was vainly questioned by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry.⁹⁰

In order to reward the Muslims who kept aloof from the movement and to induce others to follow suit, the Government exempted them from the payment of collective fines. The bait thus offered was not entirely wasted. Soon some railway employees, armed personnel and depressed classes demanded similar exemption. Only too obliged, the Government decided that "the principle granting exemption to Muslims should apply *mutatis mutandis* to all other communities or sections of the populace in respect of whom it is a legitimate presumption

87. *Ibid.*

88. Home Political File No. 3/48/42.

89. Home Political File No. 3/106/42.

90. Home Political File No. 3/48/42.

that they did not as a general rule take part in the disturbances."⁹¹

The Government knew that its massive efforts would be of no avail, if it could not control the press, a major section of which was supporting the Congress. B.J. Kirchner, Chief Press Advisor to the Government of India warned the newspaper editors well in time on 31 July 1942, "to refrain from giving publicity to statements and articles which contain direct or indirect incitement to support the threatened movement."⁹² After the arrest of the leaders and the beginning of the outbreak, the Government proceeded to tighten its control on the press. For it was realized that "disorders are infectious and news of what has occurred in one place may often lead to its repetition in a number of other places."⁹³ The All India Radio too, was instructed to pay as little attention to the disturbances as possible.

The Government also apprehended that figures and news regarding the movement might be utilised by enemy broadcasts.⁹⁴ Consequently, on 8 August 1942, the Defence of India Rule 41(i)(b) was enforced, prohibiting the printing or publishing of any factual news in relation to the mass movement sanctioned by the AICC or the measures taken by the Government against the movement, except the news emanating from authorised agencies such as, the Associated Press of India, the United Press of India or the Orient Press of India and from Government registered correspondents.⁹⁵

The Standing Committee of the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference met on 24 and 25 August 1942, and requested the Government to withdraw these restrictions, since they violated the spirit of the Delhi agreement, which had governed relations between the Government and the press during the period of the Individual Civil Disobedience movement. The Standing Committee agreed to accept a general order of "pre-censorship" of news under Defence of India Rule 41(i)(a), especially if the scrutiny could be carried out in association with

91. Home Political File No. 83/43.

92. Home Political File No. 3/13/42.

93. Home Political File No. 3/26/42.

94. Home Political File No. 3/101/42.

95. Home Political File No. 3/73/42.

the representatives of the press themselves. It also agreed not to publish news about communication interruption and strikes in war factories.⁹⁶ The Government first withdrew the 8 August order from Delhi and finally from rest of India by 1 November 1942.

A section of the Indian Press, however, felt dissatisfied with the stand taken by the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference, seceded from this body, and founded the Press Association of India on 15 September 1942, with Ram Nath Goenka (Editor, *Indian Express*) as chairman and Devadas Gandhi (*Hindustan Times*), K. Rama Rao (*National Herald*), K.P. Narayan and Samaldas Gandhi as members. This body appealed to the nationalist press to cease publication immediately against Government's recent prohibitive orders. Devadas Gandhi resigned from the Standing Committee of the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference and from the Central Press Advisory Committee. K. Rama Rao also resigned from the former body. The Press Association of India submitted another memorandum to the Government, criticizing the imposition of political censorship.⁹⁷

Gandhi's *Harijan* became the first victim of the Government's repressive measures. The issue of the *Harijan* dated 16 August 1942 was forfeited by the Government for carrying prejudicial articles. The Bombay Government seized the Navajivan Mudranalaya, Ahmedabad, and destroyed all the old copies of the *Harijan* and along with them some books, leaflets and other miscellaneous papers.⁹⁸

The nationalist newspapers, in response to Gandhi's advice on 8 August 1942, and as a mark of protest against the Government's repressive measures, decided to suspend their publications from 16 August to 6 September 1942. About

96. Home Political File No. 3/26/42.

97. Home Political File No. 3/13/42.

K. Srinivasan of *The Hindu*, C.R. Srinivasan of *Swadesmitan*, K. Srinivasan of *Free Press Journal of India*, S.A. Brelvi of *Bombay Chronicle*, Tushar Kanti Ghosh of *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and J.A. Sahani of *National Call* and Salivati Eswaran, editor of *Salivati's Newsletter* were also carrying on a ceaseless agitation, directed ostensibly against official encroachments on the liberty of the press.

Home Political File No. 3/47/43.

98. Home Political File No. 4/5/44.

seventeen English papers went on strike.⁹⁹ Of these, seven including the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta) reappeared on 31 August 1942, at the request of the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference.¹⁰⁰

Instead of helping the Government to tide over the situation, the suspension of nationalist papers created fresh complications. The temporary disappearance of these newspapers helped the rumour-mongers to the disadvantage of the Government. The whole of India turned into a whispering gallery. There was none to deny the authenticity of the rumours.

The Government was so keen to muzzle the press mainly because of its unwillingness to make public the excesses committed by the army and police in suppressing the movement, particularly in U.P. and Bihar. The Governments of U.P. and Bihar subsequently moved the Centre for the promulgation of a Central Indemnity Legislation to give protection to the police, army and magistracy which carried out many extra-legal activities in dealing with the situation. Stressing the need for a measure to legalise the illegal excesses of the Government's agents, the U.P. Governor wrote to the Viceroy on 22 September 1942: "There is no doubt that quite apart from firing upon looters and rioters, there were things done both by the police and by soldiers which are not covered by any provision of law."¹⁰¹ Giving an illustration of unlawful activities of his officers, he wrote to the Viceroy on 21 October 1942¹⁰² :

99. The important papers were, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta), *The Advance* (Calcutta), *Hindustan Standard* (Calcutta), *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), *Indian Express* (Madras) and *National Herald* (Lucknow). As regards the vernacular press, nine Bengali, twenty Hindi, four Gujarati, six Tamil, nine Telugu, eight Marathi, two Sindhi, one Urdu, one Oriya, two Assamese, two Malayalam and three Kannada papers were on strike.

Bombay Government banned two Marathi papers. Bengal Government banned three Bengali papers. Bihar Government banned *Searchlight*.

Home Political File No. 3/105/42.

100. *Ibid.*

101. Hallett (U.P.) to Linlithgow, 22 September 1942. Home Political File No. 3/42/42.

102. Hallett (U.P.) to Maxwell, 21 October 1942. *Ibid.*

...a relief party would make its slow way up a demolished railway track, mending as it went, and took hostages from the villages through which it passed as security against the cutting of the line behind. This was in the early days before the principle of collective security was enforced. The procedure was bluff, nothing could be done to the hostages, but the device on occasions proved effective. Yet it was certainly illegal.

As regards collection of collective fines, Hallett said, "collections were made at times without regular assessment, and was taken at times in kind at a valuation. All this was necessary, as the essence was speed, but...the rough and ready immediate realization of collective fines...was not covered by law."⁹⁸

The District Magistrate of Azamgarh, R.H. Niblett, admitted that the burning of houses and the imposition of collective fines were acts meant for penalising the Congress sympathizers. As an example of what he called "official dacoity," he referred to the burning of a Harijan Ashram at Dohrighat because it was headed by Swami Satyanand, a Congressman. In the Azamgarh district, the police burnt many houses belonging to Congressmen even though they were not involved in any lawless acts.⁹⁹

Identical confessions were received by Delhi from Patna. Many "acts were done in the nature of physical violence, searches and burning of houses which the law does not justify"; and "some Government officers burnt houses or carried out indiscriminate acts after they had received clear orders not to do so." "There were other cases where persons were shot while trying to run away on the approach of troops or to escape through cordons where a round up for the purpose of arresting wanted men was in progress. Sometimes such persons were not wanted men but simply ran away through fright." There were other specimens of highhandedness by the magistracy and the police¹⁰⁰ :

98. *Ibid*

99. R.H. Niblett, *The Congress Rebellion in Azamgarh* (Allahabad, Government of Uttar Pradesh, 1957), pp. 49-50.

100. Home Political File No. 3/42/42.

The Maharaja of Darbhanga alleged at the meeting of the

One District Magistrate who was completely cut off, finding that he could not use the Collective Fines Ordinance as it stood, promulgated an Ordinance of his own. The methods used in collecting the fines were often such as are not contemplated in the Ordinance and this was necessary to secure the essential moral effect of speedy realization...Arms and radio sets were in some cases called in or seized without waiting for the usual legal procedure and forced labour was employed under duress to repair sabotage and remove obstructions to communications.

Thus though Martial law was not formally imposed, its spirit was very much in evidence in both U.P. and Bihar. Despite the pressure from the two provincial Governments, however, the Government of India refused to pass any all India Indemnity legislation. Instead, it allowed the U.P. and Bihar Governments to promulgate individually the Ordinance entitled "Maintenance and Restoration of Order (Indemnity) Act, 1943." It was designed to serve the same purpose.¹⁰⁶

Though never officially admitted, even greater excesses were committed in certain other areas. At Chimur in C.P., for instance, looting and rape were committed on such a large scale that an inmate of Gandhi's Ashram at Sewagram, J.P. Bhansali, fasted for sixty-two days in a futile bid to make the Government order a thorough enquiry into the incidents. Dr. B.S. Moonje, the Hindu Mahasabha leader, visited Chimur on 25 September 1942. No less an ardent supporter of the war effort than Dr. B.S. Moonje, the Hindu Mahasabha leader, was constrained to say that Chimur offered a *prima facie* case for an enquiry¹⁰⁷ :

National Defence Council in November 1942 that without any legal authority thousands of radio sets were confiscated and fire arms seized without any consideration. As he put it : "The fire arms in the possession of respectable people were taken away from them by the authorities not because they had done anything wrong but on the ground that they had not come in actively to the assistance of law and order." Home Political File No. 3/84/42.

106. Later on Bengal also felt the necessity for such a legislation. The other provincial Governments, however, were not in favour of it. Home Political File No. 3/42/42.

107. Dr. B.S. Moonje's press statement, 22 October 1942. Home Political File No. 3/54/42.

There was a detachment of Indian troops at Ashti and one of British troops at Chimur ; but it appears that the civil officials at Chimur were not able to keep as good control over the troops at Chimur as at Ashti ; otherwise, the happenings at Chimur would not have taken place as nothing of the kind happened at Ashti. Under the circumstances how can the Government hope to convince the people of their innocence or want of responsibility in the matter.

The Government remained unmoved. Its attitude towards the question of police excesses was clearly and forcefully stated by Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member, before the Central Assembly on 15 September 1942¹⁰⁸ :

Complaints of the use of excessive force have no real meaning in situations such as those with which the police have had to deal. It cannot be expected of a small band of police confronted by a threatening mob that they should make mathematical calculations of the precise amount of force necessary to disperse it... Their first concern is to take effective action and it is their duty to do so.

Aided by its ruthlessness of intention and execution, the Government was further helped by the fact that by and large the people were unarmed and the movement lacked organization. Within weeks the task of suppression was over. By the middle of September the situation was under control. Virtually a reign of terror obtained in the country, and yet there were people who refused to be cowed down. They remained underground, preparing patiently and painstakingly for another opportunity.

108. India, *Legislative Assembly Debates*, official report, vol. 3, session 1942, cols 141-6.

4

THE UNDERGROUND RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

ONE of the distinguishing features of the Quit India movement was that the mass upsurge was accompanied by a fairly well-organized underground resistance movement. After the arrest of the top Congress leaders on 9 August 1942, a number of junior Congress leaders, present in Bombay in connection with the AICC session, went underground and began to function as the AICC.¹ With a view to channelising the sporadic and uncoordinated energies of the people into an organised movement, they decided to establish underground

1. Among these leaders were, Mrs. Sucheta Kripalani, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, Ram Nandan Mishra, Achyut Patvardhan, and Sadiq Ali. Home Political File No. 4/4/44, National Archives, New Delhi.

After sometime, Girdhari Kripalani, Balkrishna Keskar, Dwarkanath Kachru and Ram Sevak Pandey joined the underground group. Ram Sevak Pandey's statement. Home Political File No. 3/70/43.

Besides them, there were also Purushottam Trikamdas, Mohanlal Saxena, Sadashiv Mahadev Joshi, Sane Guruji, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya and Poornima Bannerjee. Onkar Sharad, *Lohia* (Delhi, 1972), p. 100.

Most of them had assumed nicknames in order to escape detection, e.g., Sucheta Kripalani—Dadi ; Rammanohar Lohia—Doctor ; Baba Raghav Das—Didi ; Aruna Asaf Ali—Kadam ; Achyut Patvardhan—Kusum ; and Sadiq Ali—Satya, Sushila etc. The person who acted as intermediary between the AICC office and the Central Directorate was known as "Kikaji."

Home Political File No. 3/70/43.

cells all over the country as a necessary preliminary step towards carrying on a mass insurrection in the country.

The underground AICC first set up its office at room number 30, on the second floor of Petladhis Mala No. 69/87, Cathedral Street, Bombay.² Besides this office, Rammanohar Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan and Sucheta Kripalani formed a separate cell, known as the Central Directorate of AICC. Later on Aruna Asaf Ali joined this group. Both the groups, however, functioned in close cooperation with each other. They did not merge together possibly to maintain secrecy and to deceive the police intelligence. The Central Directorate was more important than the AICC office so far as the organization of the underground movement was concerned.

The AICC used to receive information from the Central Directorate, which the former used to pass on to the Bombay workers for being typed, printed or cyclostyled as they desired. The Central Directorate also used to send propaganda bulletins to the AICC office for onward transmission to different provincial units. These propaganda materials easily received respectability at the provincial level because they bore the mark of the AICC. Sometimes the Bombay office used to send two hundred envelopes a day. Important instructions to different places were sent through couriers from Bombay.

The Central Directorate in Bombay was in a way the underground headquarters of the Congress Socialist party. It found a useful *modus operandi*, according to which the Directorate could communicate its own plans and programme through the AICC office to different provinces, where these were accepted without any questioning. Although prior to 1942, the party had no large mass base, except in U.P. and Bihar, it now played a dominant role in the underground movement. As a Government report stated : "The Congress Socialist party from being a left-wing revolutionary group within Congress, subject to the limitations imposed by the right-wing leaders, became overnight the controlling group of the whole Congress

2. The Office was run by Sadiq Ali (the office Secretary of the AICC), Ram Charan Pandey (clerk), Gangadhar B. Pathkey (typist) and Motiram (peon). Home Political File No. 3/70/43.

In March 1943, the office was shifted to Room No. 16 on the second floor of Govind Building, Khetwadi Main Road, Bombay. *Ibid.*

organization... The tail began to wag the dog." The Government, however, was not prepared to shift the blame from the Congress to the Congress Socialist party. As the same report commented : "The dog could not disclaim responsibility on the ground that it was wagged by the tail."³

Intending to organize a revolutionary guerilla warfare in the country, the Congress Socialist party wanted to popularise such guerilla tactics as raids, ambushes and sabotage. The objective was first to dislocate the official machinery and then to attack the means of communication, particularly the supply lines. There would also be efforts for the subversion of the police and the army. Attempts would be made to have a mass uprising to synchronise with all this. Finally, preparations would be made for the seizure of power and the setting up of a rebel administration.⁴

It seems the Congress Socialist party had formulated some plans even prior to August 1942. According to reports reaching the Government, the party had organized a secret Congress corps in Bombay, Bihar, U.P., Bengal and Punjab. Asoka Mehta in Bombay, Ram Nandan Mishra in Bihar, Balkrishna Keskar along with Rajaram Shastri and Dr. Kaushalya Nand Gairola in U.P., and Tahliani, a student leader, in Karachi were to act as secret dictators. In the Central Provinces, "The Hindustan Red Army" would be organizing underground activities. Keshav Deo Malaviya was expected to take part in the underground movement in U.P.⁵ The Forward Bloc gave unstinted support to the programme of the Congress Socialist party. Some rank and file Communist members and most of the terrorist groups also participated in the movement.

The Central Directorate issued a blueprint for mass action in both rural and urban areas. It asked the villagers to declare independence immediately and then to raid the thana, tehsil and district headquarters, the symbols of British administration. It wanted such raids to be carried out simultaneously all over the country. The culminating point of these raids would be reached when the spontaneously awakened but organized energies of

3. Home Political File No. 111/43.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Home Political File No. 3/31/42.

the people in their thousands raided the district headquarters. The government machinery would then not only be paralysed but shattered. At that moment or while the operation was on, a parallel authority of the people would be formed. That would be the beginning of the Free Indian States. This was to be achieved within four weeks.

As regards urban areas, the circular gave a call for an indefinite general strike.⁶ In another appeal to the workers, the Directorate asked them to organize street and mohalla committees to protect themselves from the army and the police. The Directorate further asked for continued strike, disruption of communications, immobilization of the army and dislocation of the supply lines.⁷ Another document suggested that "the linkage" of economic slavery, connecting the cities and the villages, should be snapped by cutting off all communication arteries, such as roads, rails,⁸ telephone and telegraph wires. "Break up this linkage in all its joints and the seven hundred thousand villages of India would recover the vigour and prosperity of freedom.... India can overthrow the British usurpers, if she atomises herself, and she can also brave a new invader should he be fool-hardy to come."⁹ On the question of application of violence as a means to attain independence, the Central Directorate pointed out: "It is no longer true that armed revolt against the usurper administration is entirely unpractical. British arms have become a term of derision and there is just a chance that roving guerillas in all parts of the country may succeed against them."⁹

To carry out more effective propaganda, the Central Directorate established an underground radio station in Bombay. At the suggestion of Rammanohar Lohia and Dahayabhai Patel, one Vithaldas (Babubhai) Khakar set up, on 20 August, a transmission centre on the top floor of a building ("Sea View") in Chowpatty, Bombay. Technical assistance and expertise were provided by Chicago Radio and Telephone

6. *Congress Responsibility For The Disturbances 1942-43* (New Delhi, Government of India, 1943), pp. 74-7.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-84.

8. File No. G-26 (p. 3) of 1942, AICC Nehru Memorial Museum, New Delhi.

9. *Ibid.*

Company. It first came on the air on 3 September 1942 at 8.45 P.M. on 41.78 metres. Its broadcasting life extended only upto 12 November 1942. "This is Congress Radio calling from somewhere in India"—thus it announced its existence to the listeners throughout this time. It mostly used to carry Congress propaganda materials supplied by Rammanohar Lohia and Purshottam Tricumdas. Besides Khakar, other persons connected with the enterprise were Vithaldas K. Jhaveri, Usha Mehta and Chandrakant Babubhai Jhaveri. To avoid detection, the transmission centre had very often to be shifted from one place to another. While it was planning to shift for the sixth time, the police got the clue, and on 12 November 1942, they raided room no. 106 of Parekh Wadi building at 9.5 P.M. and arrested Usha Mehta and Chandrakant B. Jhaveri while they were busy transmitting the programme. Besides this transmitting set, the police also seized two more sets, 120 gramophone records, which were valued at Rs. 7,000 to Rs. 10,000, 22 tin cases, containing about 14,000 ft. of photo and sound films of the last AICC session. At first the local police wanted to destroy them, but finding that they possessed "considerable historical interest," it decided to preserve them.¹⁰

The Government was elated. It thought that the Congress could now be convincingly dubbed "Fifth Columnist." It was sure that the Congress radio had definite connections with the Japanese and Japanese controlled radio stations. The hope was not fulfilled as it was discovered that "the broadcasts were confined mainly to Congress propaganda speeches, news items and directions to the public in furtherance of the civil disobedience movement." What the Congress radio had done was to emphasise that Congress stood for higher things like peace, a prosperous peasantry, goodwill to the best in all countries, and removal of foreign domination.¹¹

And yet, Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member in his speech at the National Defence Council meeting in November 1942, alleged that the Japanese had definite connections with the underground activities of the Congress. He even claimed that "a fair number out of those smuggled into the country by

10. Home Political File No. 3/44/43.

11. *Ibid.*

land or sea were recently caught.”¹² This biased official view about the Japanese complicity with the Indian underground resistance movement was never proved. Possibly it was part of a baseless and mischievous propaganda to malign the Congress.

Apart from the Central Directorate, several junior Congress leaders at the provincial level went underground and circulated leaflets mentioning various types of programme. A “Free India” bulletin instructed that people should take up the destruction of railway communications by removing rails, cutting wires and destroying bridges. The best thing would be to concentrate on railway stations. It also asked the people to burn the police chowkies and petrol tanks. As for policemen, the instruction stated : “Make the policeman look as one of you ; that is relieve him of his uniform and disarm him. This is a noble service for the nation ; for in this way you convert a slave into a freeman.” Villagers were exhorted to boycott those who came to collect taxes.¹³

In a hand-written note, Keshav Deo Malaviya, an underground activist of U.P. (his assumed name was Narain), suggested, *inter alia*, that efforts should be made to win over the police. Thanas should be rendered useless. A non-cooperative policeman was to be socially boycotted. Weapons of the police-armoury should be captured. Railways should be

12. Home Political File No. 3/84/42.

The Secretary of State for India, in his memorandum to the War Cabinet on 14 October 1942, stated :

“...the intelligence authorities still have no direct evidence to support the theory of enemy agency. It is recognised that is a possibility that cannot be ruled out, and it is not overlooked that the large number of refugees from Burma have almost certainly included some Japanese agents. It is to be recognised also, that Axis broadcasts may well have played some part though its extent cannot be estimated in stimulating subversive activities, particularly in areas such as Bengal, where the influence of Subhas Chandra Bose persists.” Nicholas Mansergh, ed., *The Transfer of Power 1942-7, Vol 3, 21 September 1942-12 June 1943* (London. 1971), p. 129.

Linlithgow, in a communication to all Provincial Governors on 2 November 1942, mentioned that some Indian businessmen headed by Birla brothers, collaborating with the Japanese financiers, were helping the Congress organization with a view to establishing their financial domination over India. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

13. Home Political File No. 35/3/42.

tampered with in such a way that human lives were not lost and people should be warned that *there was danger to their lives if they would travel by rail after 15 October 1942.*¹⁴

The U.P. Government seized another interesting document issued in the name of the "War Council, U.P. Congress," which contained detailed instructions regarding attack on communications and police stations¹⁵ :

There should be a map in each district showing (a) Kachcha and Pucca roads, railway stations with their distances from one another, railway bridges and culverts, whether patrolled by police guards or not. (b) Petrol and Kerosine installations, showing the quantity and protective measures, if any. (c) Aerodromes and Government grain stores, cantonments, war production centres. (d) Hydro-electric stations. (e) Police stations and post offices, showing the total strength of the force and the number of arms and ammunition kept and the distance from headquarters. (f) Lists of persons bearing arms and the number of arms. (g) Lists of persons who opposed Congress. (h) Lists of persons who can shelter Congress workers at the time of necessity. (i) Lists of absconding Congress workers and details of their work, close touch should be maintained with them. (j) Cutting of wires should be continued. Insulators on tops of poles should be destroyed. (k) Transport of war materials should be hindered. (l) The destruction of Government records and papers is beneficial to the tenants.

Even a more comprehensive scheme was issued in the name of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee¹⁶ :

1. Let single workers proceed to a particular area, organize 200/500 people there and explain them the working programme. Let the people also be explained that there may be firing and lathi charge as a result of doing this and so let them come prepared. Let a day be fixed as soon as possible. Care should also be taken for this. In the event of any apprehension,

14. Home Political File No. 3/31/42.

15. Home Political File No. 3/19/43.

16. Home Political File No. 3/31/42.

it is better not to go armed. A brave and fearless person should be the leader of this batch.

2. All the roads nearer to the police station should be examined before. Arrangements should be made to cut down trees on the side of those roads and to block the roads by them on the night previous to the raid. It should be seen that no reinforcement can reach there from outside.
3. When there is a post office close to the police station, both should be raided simultaneously. Immediate information may be transmitted through post office. Therefore, cut the wire communications and bury the posts on the previous night, as if they cannot be replaced quickly.
4. The work will commence in the last part of night when the police employees will not be on the alert and in the morning thana will be raided.
5. Surround first of all the magazine. Then ask the police employees to surrender. Don't allow any one of them to go outside. As a matter of the first sign of their surrendering, they should set fire to their uniform and records. Ask them the key and take away whatever arms are there to safe unknown place. Some people armed with lathis should guard the police. Then set the Thana house on fire. The place where arms would be kept concealed should not be disclosed to others. This work should be done by very reliable persons. If there is no such opportunity, then throw them into a river nearby or into the thana tank. In order to test the police employees, keep them under watch for some days. If their family and children are with them, take care that they are not ill-treated.
6. Just after the capture of thana, send information everywhere. Then after a few days convene a big meeting there and announce the formation of a small panchayat... It will be an advantage if this sort of work is done simultaneously in the police stations nearby. The earlier the better.

As regards funds, the underground activists initially received good response from the Indian business community and were able to collect a good amount of money in the name of the Indian National Congress. At a later stage, guerilla bands were encouraged to undertake political dacoities in order to raise funds for local units.

Regional guerilla units used to collect arms and ammunition from their own locality. The Central Directorate might have supplied an insignificant number of arms and ammunition to the regional units. In Bihar, arms and ammunition were collected from Nepal Terai. In many places, spears and other weapons were manufactured from fish-plates, and other pieces of metal taken from railway godowns and tracks. In some areas, the guerillas captured arms from police armoury, running trains and even sometimes from military ammunition depots. They also collected private arms such as, single and double barrel shot guns. In most of the places, they had their own units for manufacturing bombs and grenades.¹⁷

II

The underground resistance movement received a great fillip with the escape, on 9 November 1942, of Jayaprakash Narayan, the general Secretary of the Congress Socialist party, along with five other political prisoners from the Hazaribagh Central Jail in Bihar.¹⁸ He moved from place to place, contact-

17 Home Political File No. 18/9/42, Fortnightly report, Bihar, September 1942.

18. These five were—Ram Nandan Mishra, Jogendra Sukul, Suraj Narayan Singh, Saligram Singh and Gulali Sonar of Hindustan Socialist Republican Army. All of them were members of the Congress Socialist Party. Home Political File No. 18/11/42, Fortnightly report, Bihar, November 1942.

After their escape, Jayaprakash Narayan and his associates entered the Gaya district. They then divided themselves into two groups. One, consisting of Jayaprakash, Ramnandan Mishra and Saligram Singh, proceeded towards Banaras, and the other, consisting of Jogendra Sukul, Suraj Narayan Singh and Gulali Sonar went to North Bihar. But soon (4 December 1942) Jogendra Sukul was arrested at Muzaffarpur. From Banaras Jayaprakash went to Delhi to chalk out a programme of action. From Delhi, he proceeded to

ed hiding Congress workers, and inculcated in them a fighting spirit to prolong and intensify the struggle against the British Raj. Without losing much time, he established contact with the Central Directorate in Bombay. In order to organize the whole underground resistance movement in a proper way, to train up guerilla fighters, and in general to prepare for the launching of a new offensive in the near future, Jayaprakash Narayan soon issued his first letter, *To All Fighters For Freedom* (15 pages) from "somewhere in India." He also issued two pamphlets dealing with the organization of guerilla bands and their training. One was named *A.B.C. of Dislocation* (16 pages) and the other *Instructions—sabotage and communications* (24 pages).¹⁹ The second booklet was prepared with the help of "restricted" official work, *Demolitions Field Engineering Pamphlet No. 7*, published by Engineer-in-Chief's branch in 1940.

Justifying the use of violence, Jayaprakash Narayan argued that the Congress was bound by the Bombay resolution to fight aggression with violence. Once Britain was named as an aggressor, there was every justification now to fight her with arms. As he put it ²⁰:

Bombay and stayed there for three months. From Bombay he went to Madras and from there he came to Calcutta. In Calcutta, a web of secret organization was formed with many cells to help in carrying out the programme for the success of the people's Revolution. A separate code for receiving and sending out information was framed. Jayaprakash with Suraj Narayan Singh and Vijaya (youngest sister of Achyut Patvardhan) proceeded to Nepal. Nepal was to be the all-India centre of the *Azad Dasta*. K.K. Dutta, *History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar. Vol. 3. 1942-47* (Patna, 1958) pp. 269-73.

19. Home Political File No. 3/68/43. Police first seized these two booklets in course of their investigation of the Poona Capital Cinema Bomb case. Later Delhi police found, on 8 May 1943, two similar works in possession of Jiwarani Paliwal, an underground activist of Delhi. The Government of India immediately alerted other provincial Government "to do their utmost to prevent the circulation" of these documents. Home Political File No. 3/64/43.
20. *Congress Responsibility*, n. 6. p. 73. Rammanohar Lohia, another front-rank Congress Socialist, expressing his views on violence in *Ninth August* (26 January 1944) said that he would not use sophistry to hide his intentions; rather he would not care for Gandhiji's condemnation nor would he try to justify his stand. File No. O-55/1946 AICC Nehru Memorial Museum. Two other Congress Socialists, Achyut Patvardhan and Aruna Asaf Ali expressed their views on

My own interpretation of the Congress position—not Gandhiji's—is clear and definite. Congress is prepared to fight aggression violently if the country became independent. Well, we have declared ourselves independent, and also named Britain as an aggressive power ; we are, therefore, justified within the terms of the Bombay resolution itself to fight Britain with arms. If this does not accord with Gandhi's principles, that is not my fault. The Working Committee and the AICC themselves have chosen to differ from Gandhiji and to reject his conception of non-violence as applied to the war.

I should add that I have no hesitation in admitting that non-violence of the brave, if practised on a sufficiently large scale, would make violence unnecessary, but where such non-violence is absent, I should not allow cowardice, clothed in Shastric subtleties, to block the development of this revolution and lead to its failure.

Jayaprakash Narayan attributed the failure of the first phase of the movement to three factors. First, there was a lack of organization to lead the resurgent masses. Second, there was absence of a full programme of revolution. Third, all parts of the country did not rise simultaneously. Besides, due to lack of knowledge and training people failed to create their own power and resist the reconquest of the liberated areas.²¹ The masses did well in tackling the negative tasks of the revolution and indeed went on a destructive spree ; but they ignored the positive and creative aspect of the movement. They forgot about the formation of revolutionary units and people's police and militia forces. To keep up mass-enthusiasm during an ebb period in the "Evolution of a Revolution," Jayaprakash

non-violence thus : "The Congress has more than once sought the freedom to interpret the general policy of non-violence in a form not acceptable to Gandhiji . . . Indian National Congress is a political organization pledged to win political independence of the country. It is not an institution for organizing world peace. Honestly we cannot go as far as Mahatma Gandhi wants us to go. Most of us felt that we were not able to take up the grave responsibility of declaring that we would completely eschew violence when we have to deal with widespread internal disorder in this country or external aggression." *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta), 18 January 1946.

21. Home Political File No. 3/64/43.

Narayan wanted the guerilla bands to continue "skirmishes," "frontier activities," "minor clashes," "sniping," "patrolling" etc. as a preparation for the second offensive.²²

The *A.B.C. of Dislocation* was full of guidelines for sabotage works. Participant groups in each district of the province would be known as "Azad Dastas." Each group was to be a band of shock troopers, a sort of advance guard. With proper technical and political training, they were to wage guerilla warfare against the enemy. There were two hundred and fifty districts in India. In a district of average size two hundred and fifty Azads might be organized into five Jathas with fifty Azads each, which could be further sub-divided into twenty-five Dastas with ten Azads each. Every member of the Dasta could use the title of "Azad" as a suffix to his surname. An Azad had to take the following pledge before entering into the Dastas²³:

I, a citizen of the Republic of India and true son of Mother India, do solemnly pledge that I, as an Azad, shall not cease fighting the British usurper till the Republic of India is established and the free flag of the Republic flies from one end of country to the other.

I pledge my unquestioned loyalty to the Indian Revolution and do solemnly declare that I shall be ready to lay down my life in its service.

I pledge further to obey implicitly the orders of my officers and to observe strict military discipline.

Should I by weakness, cowardice or evil design, violate this oath and betray the interest of my people, may I suffer any punishment, including death, at the hands of my comrades.

It was provided that the leader of the group must be elected and he should carry out work through joint consultations. Political workers, school teachers, college students, deserters from the army and the police could become the Dastadars (Commander of the Azad Dastas) and Jathadars (Commander of the Azad Jathas). There might not be any central organization. But at the district level, there must be close co-operation and co-ordination. An Azad Subedar

22. *Congress Responsibility*, n. 6, pp. 70-4.

23. Home Political File No. 3/64/43.

would be held responsible for the general guidance of the Azad movement for the entire province. The Subedar could appoint Azad Ziladars from among the Jathadars. The Dastadars were subordinates to the Jathadars. The finance, rations and other provisions could be collected from locally available sources. In times of necessity, they could resort to dacoities also. In all matters they were to be self-sufficient. They must be able to win moral and material support of the local people for their cause. The Dastas would have their base camps in the hilly and jungle tracts. A trained cadre of revolutionaries would thus be formed, whose plan of action would be : (a) dislocation of communications and of the war effort, (b) depriving Government treasuries of money, and (c) raids for destruction of the centres of enemy's authority and for disarming them. There was also a detailed plan for the training of the guerillas.

The second booklet, *Instructions—Sabotage and Communications*, was meant for the Azad Dastas. It gave a detailed exposition of the methods of committing acts of sabotage. It dealt with (i) dislocation of communications—telegraph and telephone wires and installations, railways, roads and highways, postal services, wireless etc. ; (ii) industrial dislocation—factories, mines and docks ; and (iii) incendiarism—burning of records, buildings, petrol pumps etc.²⁴

To deal with the shortage of arms Jayaprakash Narayan recommended the Karnatak pattern of violence to be adopted by the guerillas in all places. The Karnatak pattern of violence envisaged a type where targets were to be small, governmental and situated in the rural areas ; the easiest types of dislocation were to be practised ; guerillas had to work in their own areas, small groups had to carry out surprise raids ; and non-killing and non-injury to human life was strictly enjoined.²⁵

Jayaprakash Narayan prepared these pamphlets, under the impression that India might soon witness another uprising, like the one that had taken place in August-September 1942.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.* The targets of easy access were mail runners, mail-buses, small post-offices, post-boxes, village charivdies, village chowkies, dak-bungalows, small railway stations, telephons and telegraph wires, rail-roads, revenue collections, etc. *Ibid.*

This proved a vain hope. As he himself wrote in his second letter *To All Fighters of Freedom*, released on 1 September 1943 : "In December last it appeared to me that it might be possible within a few months for another mass uprising to take place. That rising has not yet materialized, and it has to be admitted, does not appear to be immediately imminent." He, however, did not lose heart : "it would be a mistake to deduce from this that the spirit of the people has been crushed or that there is no fight left in them. The people never hated British rule as they do to-day and were never more determined to be rid of it." Jayaprakash Narayan further added :

The masses cannot move till there is force in us to move them. They cannot respond, they cannot follow us till we are able by our activities, and the strength and efficiency of our organization to win their confidence. The masses did their duty once. It was we who were found wanting. They shall do their duty again provided we do ours. In August last the masses had before their eyes the concrete power of the Congress and the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Today if they are made to feel that they are left alone, that there is no organized force in the country, which remains undefeated and continues the struggle, they would naturally sink down into despair and resign themselves to their kismet.

Jayaprakash Narayan, therefore, exhorted the fighters of freedom to build up their organization and continue the fight. He told them that they must strengthen their organization and carry ceaseless war unto the enemy. No suffering, no sacrifice should be counted too great. No controversy, no temptation, no false hope should deflect their course. All avenues of struggle were open to them. They must keep on fighting, whether for a year or ten years should make no difference to them.

Jayaprakash Narayan also decried the controversy regarding the use of violent methods which had sprung up since the publication of the correspondence between Gandhi and Linlithgow. His formula was : "Every fighter for freedom is free to choose his own method. Those who believe in similar methods should work together as a disciplined group. And the least that those who follow a different path should do is

not to come in the way of one another and waste their energies in mutual recrimination."

With a view to keeping up the morale of the masses by giving a hope that a bigger action would take place in the foreseeable future, Jayaprakash Narayan suggested an interim plan, according to which the guerillas would resort to a mass propaganda drive (to maintain the link between the fighters and the people) to the maximum extent. This might create the impression that the movement had not ended. He offered organization, propaganda and overt resistance as the minimum programme for the present. As regards overt resistance, he suggested that an agitation could be started, centering on the problem of food crisis in the country. With a little tact, the anger and frustration of the hungry people could be turned against the Government. Under the guidance of the Azads the starving and needy people should be induced to seize and loot Government grain shops. "Here is a vital programme," Jayaprakash said, "which tackled with imagination and courage can convert the country into a seething cauldron in which the Empire can soon be boiled to death."²⁶

III

The underground resistance movement made some dents in Bihar, U.P., Bengal, Delhi, Orissa and Assam. Jayaprakash Narayan selected Bihar as his chief operational base. The close proximity of Nepal enabled him to operate here from his headquarters in Nepal's Terai region. He started a regular guerilla training school. Gulali Sonar and Suraj Narain Singh also were connected with this enterprise. Their centre was located in the jungles, north of Jaleswar. They had in all probability built up a strong guerilla force. When later the Indian police, with the co-operation of Nepalese authorities,

26. Jayaprakash Narayan, *Towards Struggle* (Bombay, 1946), pp. 35-57. Following this cue, the AICC in its outline plan for 1943-44, said that it would give maximum importance to food problem: "In the towns and cities the edge of the people's hunger should be turned through propaganda and personal contact against the British Government which is responsible for starving the people." Home Political File No. 3/13/44.

searched these hide-outs, they found some interesting things. There were typewritten appeals by Jayaprakash Narayan to American "brothers", a Hindi circular issued in the name of Aruna Asaf Ali, some instructional notes on use of explosives to destroy communication lines, and two silver Gandhi rupee coins. There were apparent evidences of musketry practice in the neighbourhood and of consumption of about four maunds of rice daily by guerillas. Besides the common weapons, they had tommy guns and .455 Webley revolvers.²⁷

Under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan the network of the underground resistance movement spread out widely in Bihar. With the growth in the intensity of guerilla warfare, a number of dormant terrorist groups became active in north and central Bihar. Former terrorists like Suraj Nath Chaube, Parsuram Singli, Parath Brahmachari and Siaram Singh became the leaders of local guerilla-bands. The Bengal groups were also active in places like Jamshedpur. In the Santal Parganas, Sapha Hor's group (red shirt followers of Lambodar Mukherjee, the Forward Bloc leader) were assisting the underground resisters. In northern Bihar, Jogendra Sukul was the leader of the local guerillas. This group indulged in many political dacoities to augment its funds. Many of its members were trained in Nepal. Another group of armed rebels was active in the Dumaria and Imamganj areas. This group had wide-spread ramifications. The guerillas were mostly concentrated in the Districts of Bhagalpur, Monghyr and Santal Parganas.²⁸

Besides these, the northern strip of the Hazaribagh district and eastern part of the Gaya district were also centres of underground activities.²⁹ A training camp for the guerillas was also set up in the jungles of the Bank sub-division. It had wireless sets and a charging machine. Some army deserters too had joined the camp. They were imparting training in the use of weapons to the recruits. In Chotanagpur, the guerillas

27. Home Political File No. 18/6/43, Fortnightly report, Bihar, June 1943.

28. Bihar Police Administration Report. Terrorism 1943. Home Political File No. 3/19/44.

29. Home Political File No. 18/3/43, Fortnightly report, Bihar, March, 1943.

were inciting the aborigines to participate in the movement.³⁰ Swaraj Panchayats were formed at Sonbarsa in the Tirhut Division and at Bhagalpur.³¹ About 44 political prisoners escaped from the jails during the last part of December 1942 to join the guerilla bands.³² A "destructive party" was formed at Monghyr to go for action at short notice. This party had also seized large quantity of hand grenades from a military depot. The Bihar Government reported that raids were contemplated on armouries and magazines in order to acquire arms and explosives after which roads and railways would be wrecked on a date to coincide with either Japanese invasion or an attempt to recapture Burma. A party was formed to assassinate Government officers and plans were made to kidnap them.³³

The guerillas in Muzaffarpur were trying to form a parallel Government there. The leaders were Gobind Singh, Ram Bahadur Singh and Krishna Singh. The whole village of Dhanuar in Muzaffarpur was under the control of the guerillas. The underground resisters brought out their own paper *Baghi* (in Hindi) from the Gaya district.³⁴

In praise of the working of the guerillas, a Government official stationed at Sahibganj, reported thus³⁵ :

The political organization around this district is such that the like of it has never been seen. They have a code of signals by whistle, tick-tacking similar to bookmakers tour at Epsom and at night signalling by light both flash light and oil. The rapidity of the movement and operation of

30. Home Political File No 18/11/42, Fortnightly report, Bihar, November 1942.

31. Home Political File Nos. 18/9/42, 18/10/42, 18/11/42. Fortnightly report. Bihar, September, October and November 1942.

32. Home Political File No. 18/12/42, Fortnightly report, Bihar, December 1942.

33. Home Political File Nos. 18/11/42, 18/12/42, Fortnightly reports, Bihar, November and December 1942.

34. Home Political File Nos. 18/4/43, 18/6/43, Fortnightly reports, Bihar, April and June 1943.

35. Meneze, a signal officer on the Howrah division in charge of Sahibganj—submitted this report. He said that the guerillas had captured gangmen's tools, tools from engine sheds, signal stakes, from keymen. They used to hamper repair works by carrying away trollies, tools etc. Home Political File No. 3/31/42.

them is incredible. I am not an alarmist or a defeatist but the restoration of services both rail and telephonic will not be an easy matter due to the amount of materials required.

As has been mentioned earlier, Nepal provided a base for the guerillas from Bihar. Particularly the area between Raxual and Jaleswar, where there were passes into Nepal, provided them with a springboard. Without the co-operation of the Nepalese authorities, the Government of India could not carry out a combing operation in this area. But the Maharaja of Nepal was not in favour of carrying out a joint operation of troops to mop up Indian rebels from their hideouts. The Nepalese Government felt annoyed when the Government of India made a covert suggestion for the extension to Nepal of the application of Rules 35 and 38 of the Defence of India Rules and Section 17 of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908. The Maharaja of Nepal rejected the proposal outright, saying that it represented "a tendency on the part of the Government of India to place Nepal in the same line with feudatories of India." To assuage the feelings of the Maharaja the Government of India immediately assured him that they were "determined to uphold the full and independent sovereign status of Nepal, and it causes them distress to find that the Maharaja should entertain any doubt on this score." However, the Nepalese Government agreed to co-operate with the Government of India only in the matter of implementation of Article 4 of the Extradition treaty. As a result, only one man could be arrested out of 435 "wanted" men. The local Nepalese officials did not fully co-operate with the British Government. It seemed, Bara Hakims and other Nepalese border officials were in sympathy with the Indian insurgents. The Nepalese Government's obvious lack of interest in this matter led to complete failure of the mopping up operations.³⁶

36. Home Political File No/3. 39/42. The Police Sub-Inspector of the Bairagnia Police Station reported that, on 21 September 1942, the Hakim of Appellate court Gaur, Tarai Nepal, "called all the influential persons of Bairagnia and other places who had fled to Gaur, Tarai Nepal and encouraged them not to be afraid in any way. All sorts of comforts will be given to them. The Nepal Government has ordered them (officers) to see that they should not get any kind of

It was from a bamboo hut at *Bakro Ka Tapu* (island in the Kachar of the river Kosi) that Jayaprakash Narayan guided the central organization of the Azad Dasta. In front of the hut was a billock which was utilized as a wireless station. Rammanohar Lohia, who had come there with Shyamnandan Singh, became the Director of the Radio and Publicity Department. The office of the Bihar Provincial Azad Dasta was also located at a nearby place. The first military training camp was started in Nepal with 35 people, Sardar Nityanand Singh being the chief instructor.³⁷

On 21 May 1943, the Nepalese police arrested Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammanohar Lohia and three others. The arrested people were kept at Hanumannagar police outpost. On 22 May 1943, a batch of about fifty guerillas came and attacked the police outpost. After an exchange of fire the prisoners were rescued. In the scuffle, one Nepali guard was killed and another was seriously injured. The Government of India felt much disappointed "since the arrest of those five people would apparently knock the bottom out of such underground activities ...and might lead to information which would enable us to assess responsibility for the Rebellion with some finality."³⁸

Immediately after the Hanumannagar incident, Jayaprakash Narayan and other top leaders left Nepal and entered Bihar. They sent their men to military cantonment areas to tamper with the loyalties of Indian soldiers and procure dynamites from nearby coalfields to blow up bridges and dislocate communication lines. The police again failed to arrest Jayaprakash Narayan on 30 July 1943, when, along with Gulali Sonar, he came to Muzaffarpur to collect money from the local zamindars. According to an official report, Jayaprakash Narayan at that time had at his disposal a band of fifty young men, who were

trouble there. Order has also been received from Nepal to refund the amounts which were charged from them in carrying their grains and other things." Datta, n. 18, p. 267.

On 12 December 1942 the police staff of Sitamarhi along with a spy visited the Janakpur Mela. Although several "absconders" were present there, they could arrest only Ram Lakshman Gupta. *Ibid.*, p. 268.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 274.

38. Home Political File Nos 3/39/42, 3/68/43.

ready to sacrifice their lives to protect him. On 9 August 1943, about 150-250 guerillas attacked the police outpost in Sonbarsa Diara in the Bhagalpur district. In the gun duel, four rebels were killed and some more were drowned in the river. Four policemen suffered serious injuries.³⁹

The Bihar police administration report stated : "There was a series of armed encounters between the police and elusive guerillas operating in jungle terrain favourable to the latter. A number of rebels were killed and quantity of arms and ammunition recovered. About 1,200 arrests were made." The report stressed that there were "many uneasy alliances" between guerilla fighters and professional criminals, and only a small proportion of the loot found its way into the coffers of the former. In fact, "it was the political glamour that attracted to the terrorist ranks so many disgruntled or unemployed youths." The report alleged⁴⁰ that gruesome crimes and atrocities were committed by the guerillas against informers and defectors. Few people, consequently, liked to bear witness against the underground resisters.⁴⁰

Jayaprakash Narayan was at last arrested in the Punjab towards the end of September 1943 ; though for some time, the Congress Socialist party went on announcing that he was still at large.⁴¹ This upset seriously the plans of the underground resistance movement, and completely dislocated the Congress Socialist Party's strategy. There was none who could replace Jayaprakash Narayan. Already a cleavage had appeared among the underground resisters on the issue of violence. The rift now widened further. The pro-non-violence group was now eager to renounce violence by starting individual satyagraha, and by reviving khadi, spinning and organizing Gram Sangathan for settlement of village disputes.⁴²

On 28 February 1944, at a secret meeting of the inner circle of the underground resisters in Darbhanga, it was decided

39. Home Political File No. 18/8/43, Fortnightly report, Bihar, August 1943 ; also File No. 3/68/43.

40. Bihar Police Administration Report. Terrorism 1943. Home Political File No. 3/19/44.

41. Home Political File No. 18/10/43, Fortnightly report, Bihar, October 1943.

42. Home Political File Nos. 18/11/43, 18/5/44, Fortnightly reports, Bihar, November 1943, May 1944.

to organize the Azad Sena with an active and reserve branch. The purpose was apparently to organize an effective force in each thana three times stronger than the local police force to ensure success in future attacks on police stations. There was a plan for the creation of two dictatorships for North and South Bihar.⁴³ The plan, however, did not materialize.

Among the important guerilla leaders, Siaram Singh was first to switch over from violence to non-violence. Seeing this rift in the underground resistance camp, the police intensified their operations against the guerillas. The whole of North Bhagalpur was cordoned off by the police. Collective fines were imposed on the affected villages. This had the desired effect. Certain villages and people of certain castes rendered help to the police, and were in turn granted exemption from the fines. Another method the Government employed was the detention of relatives of the guerillas, especially those who used to offer them shelters.⁴⁴

These measures facilitated the arrest of the leaders of the guerillas, such as Shyamnandan Singh, Suraj Nath Chaube, Mahendra Gope, Suraj Narain Singh, Gulali Sonar and Bindubashini Singh. Birinchi Missir and Kare Tanti were shot dead by the police in North Bhagalpur and North Monghyr respectively.⁴⁵ With the arrest of so many leaders, the guerilla activities naturally came to an end. Later, Aruna Asaf Ali, in February 1945, made an unsuccessful bid to revive the movement with the help of Badri Narain Sinha.⁴⁶

The Congress Socialist party propaganda pamphlets went on advocating "revolutionary assaults" on the enemy for some time more. But the high tide of revolutionary fervour had receded too far back.

43. Home Political File No. 18/3/44, Fortnightly report, Bihar, March 1944.

44. Home Political File No. 18/6/44, Fortnightly report, Bihar, June 1944.

45. Home Political File Nos. 18/3/44, 18/4/44, 18/9/44 and 18/11/44, Fortnightly reports, Bihar, March, April, September and November 1944.

46. Home Political File No. 18/2/45, Fortnightly report, Bihar, February 1945.

IV

Unlike Bihar, the insurgents in Bombay fought largely with bombs and other modern weapons. The activists at first used crude bombs, which sometimes did not burst. But gradually they perfected the technique, and the incidence of bomb-throwing increased. Upto the middle of February 1943, the total number of bomb explosions was officially estimated as 375, and in addition 243 bombs were discovered by the police before they could do any damage. Five Government servants were killed and eighty-two injured, while thirteen members of the public lost their lives, and one hundred and eight were seriously injured.⁴⁷ Bombs and hand-grenades were manufactured at many places. One of the places was believed to be Block No. 43 on the top floor of Gautam Nivas, Charni Road. When police raided the place on 30 January 1943, they found five live round metal casting bombs and some more material. The resisters used to meet in a flat on the first floor of Krishna Nivas, Walkeshwar Road. One Shrinivas Bhagawandas Marwari, the secretary of local Marwari Sammelan, was giving financial assistance to the underground activists. Dr. Vasant Avasare, Parshuram Pupala, Annaji Balkrishna Barve, Bapubdhai, Shankarlal and Shantilal were closely connected with the manufacture of bombs.⁴⁸

The police discovered "a veritable arsenal" in a Poona house owned by one Sahasrabudhe. From there were recovered twenty-four "mills bombs," five fuse mine contacts, six revolvers, several sticks of T.N.T., 303 ammunition, phosphorus and a number of bottles of nitric and sulphuric acids, and a number of pamphlets on the use and manufacture of bombs. There was also a list containing the description of all the military ordnance depots situated in India. The Government had a suspicion that many Indian subordinate officials serving in the office of the Field Controller of Military Accounts, Poona, and in the ordnance factories and depots were co-operating with the underground resisters, by supplying high explosives.⁴⁹

47. Home Political File No. 35/3/42.

48. Home Political File No. 3/8/43.

49. Home Political File No. 18/2/43, Fortnightly report, Bombay, February 1943. In February 1944, the police seized one land mine (anti-

Guerilla bands were most active in the Districts of Kolaba, Broach, Satara, Surat, Belgaum, Poona, Ahmedabad and Bombay. In Kolaba, one pleader named Kotwal led a properly armed and well-organised guerilla band which was mainly engaged in sabotaging the hydro-electric system. Kotwal received substantial financial assistance from Bombay, and paid fancy wages to labourers for carrying supplies to his "hideouts" in the jungle. On 31 December 1942, the police made a forced march of thirty-seven miles through the jungle to track down Kotwal and his associates. A gun battle ensued. The guerillas lost the battle and lost their leader too. The police seized a large number of guns, bombs and cartridges.⁵⁰

In Ahmedabad, an Azad Government of the guerillas had been functioning. This government appointed one Jayanand as District Magistrate, who imposed a war tax on the people. Upto 15 October 1942, about Rs. 7,000 was collected.⁵¹

Satara made the most significant contribution to the underground resistance movement in the Bombay presidency. Most of the guerillas here were trained in the handling of arms and ammunition. The insurgents under the leadership of Nana Patil made raids on Taluka treasuries and police outposts. Nana Patil was the dictator of the whole region. Political dacoities were often undertaken. On 3 March 1945, for instance, they raided the local branch of the New Citizen Bank of India and took away Rs. 17,000.⁵² They also attacked running trains, police outposts, post-offices and nearby villages. Many guerillas died in encounters with the police. The people of Satara established their own "Patri Sarkar." The village panchayats used to decide legal cases. In the southern part of the Satara district, about 75 percent of civil disputes were decided by these

rank), two "mills bombs," hand-grenades, eight crude bombs, three revolvers and one automatic pistol and a large quantity of cordinate gelignite fuse caps, fuses, blasting powder, chemicals for preparing incendiary and anti-personal bombs in a rebel hide-out in Bombay. Home Political File No. 18/2/44, Fortnightly report, Bombay, February 1944.

50. Home Political File No. 18/1/43. Fortnightly report, Bombay, January 1943.

51. Home Political File No. 3/84/42.

52. Home Political File No. 18/3/45, Fortnightly report, Bombay, March 1945.

courts. The Government had to admit that the absconders had very skillfully set up an organization to which the villager was turning for the redress of his grievances. Documents seized during a raid on one of the villages (where a court of the so-called parallel government was holding a session) showed that all the features and paraphernalia of a parallel government had been set up.⁵³

The success of the rebels in Satara gave a lot of impetus to the guerillas elsewhere.⁵⁴ In the neighbouring areas also guerilla bands were raised up. In Kundal (Aundh state), the guerilla band was known as a "Dahshatwadi Dal," which was formed out of Rashtra Seva Dal units. They used to carry out arbitration and victimization orders.⁵⁵

The underground activists of Bombay had their own organ called *Krantikari* (Revolutionary). It was published in Marathi, and edited by Achyut Patvardhan and S.M. Joshi. Most of the leading Congress Socialists used to contribute articles to this paper.⁵⁶ Later *Ninth August* in English was published from the same place. It was also edited by Achyut Patvardhan. In March 1944, the police seized the press and arrested ten persons associated with it.⁵⁷

Some time in August 1943, an important meeting of the underground activists took place in Bombay, where it was decided to suspend overt civil disobedience activities for the time being, and to concentrate on organizing the masses for a

53. Home Political File Nos. 18/3/45, 18/6/75, Fortnightly reports, Bombay March, June 1945. On 26 June 1945, the police raided a temple in Nerla village where a people's court was functioning at that time. The police arrested twenty-seven persons, for assembling there. A register of summary trial proceedings was seized. The police also found some notices issued by the "Patri Sarkar." Home Political File No. 18/7/45, Fortnightly report, Bombay, July 1945.

54. Home Political File No. 18/5/45, Fortnightly report, Bombay, May 1945.

55. Home Political File No. 18/6/45, Fortnightly report, Bombay, June 1945.

56. Home Political File No. 18/6/43, Fortnightly report, Bombay, June 1943.

57. Home Political File No. 18/3/44, Fortnightly report, Bombay, March 1944.

more successful fight later on.⁵⁸ Meanwhile Gandhi's release from jail and the release of some other Congressmen caused a rift among the rank and file of the underground workers and weakened the underground resistance movement. The Government had also tightened their grip over the guerilla-controlled areas. A full infantry Brigade was put into action for combing operations in the Belgaum-Dharwar area. Extra armed police had been acquired from the neighbouring provinces. The cream of the Intelligence Branch was working at high pressure.⁵⁹ Beginning from early 1943, the Government did not take much time to put into prison underground leaders, of note, such as N.G. Gore (Bombay); Sriranga Kamath (Karnatak region); Y.B. Chavan, Vasant Bandu Patil, Pravinchandra Chotalal and Bapu Kachare (Satara); Appamagauda, Anna Guruji and Bapu Saheb Ragangauda (Belgaum); Ramlal Pardeshi (Nagpur) and Pandu Master (Karad Taluka). Only Rammanohar Lohia could elude the police till 21 May 1944. Two guerilla leaders, Bhimsingh Vachatbhai Parmar and Yesha Babu Ramoshi of Satara, lost their lives fighting against the police.

These arrests caused a great setback to the underground movement in the Bombay region. Some of the guerilla leaders who survived did their utmost to revive the movement through the Rashtra Seva Dal units. Apprehending further trouble, the Bombay Government banned the Rashtra Seva Dal in September 1945,⁶⁰ and ensured that the movement did not revive.

V

In Bengal, Midnapur, a traditional stronghold of the Congress, emerged as the storm centre of rebellious activities. As an official reporter preferred to describe it, Midnapur had a long "history of determined lawlessness." In the Contai and Tamluk sub-divisions practically the whole of countryside

58. Home Political File No. 18/8/43, Fortnightly report, Bombay, August 1943.

59. Home Political File No. 18/4/43, Fortnightly report, Bombay, April 1943.

60. Home Political File No. 18/9/45, Fortnightly report, Bombay, September 1945.

was organized in support of an insurrection.⁶¹ Disturbances started in this district rather late, on 29 September 1942. The rebels burnt down Sutanta, Patashpur and Khejri police stations. In their clashes with the police, they showed "considerable care in planning, an effective warning system had been devised, elementary tactical principles were observed by encirclement and flanking movements clearly on prearranged signals." The southern parts were extensively organized. There were district headquarters functioning with courts, known as Gandhi Hajats. Police and informers were kidnapped and prosecuted. Leaflets were issued in the name of the Council of Action, Bengal Provincial Congress Committee.⁶²

Like Satara, Midnapore had also its own parallel Government called the "Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar." Its head, known as "Sarbadhinayaka" (Dictator), was elected by the local Congress Committee. He held the war portfolio. Other important portfolios were law and order, health, education, justice, agriculture and propaganda. This Government was first formed on 17 December 1942 with Satish Chandra Samanta as the first Sarbadhinayaka.⁶³ On 26 November 1943, four Thana Jatiya Sarkars were formed, comprising Sutahata, Nandigram, Mahishadal and Tamluk. Each area had a Vidyut Bahini under the command of a General Officer Commanding and a Commandant. It also had intelligence and ambulance branches. According to the Bengal Government, "the forces of disorder were accompanied by doctors and nursing orderlies to attend the casualties ; and the intelligence system is clearly efficient, since movements contemplated by the police and troops are very early known and measures taken to forestall them."⁶⁴

In Midnapore, the resisters used to sink their own ferry boats to prevent the movement of officials. The Congress Socialist party here was functioning in closer co operation with the Revolutionary Socialist party. The guerillas used to kidnap

61. Home Political File No. 3/34/42.

62. Home Political File Nos. 18/10/42 and 18/11/42, Fortnightly reports, Bengal, October and November 1942.

63. *Anrita Bazar Patrika*, 20 December 1945.

64. Home Political File Nos. 18/10/42 and 18/11/42, Fortnightly reports, Bengal, October and November 1942,

sons of rich families to demand ransom. There was a *Garam Dal* (violence party) to carry out attacks on Government buildings and installations.⁶⁵ The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee mentioned that the guerillas had destroyed thirty bridges, cut twenty-seven miles of telegraph wire, broken 194 telegraph poles, blocked seventeen roads by cutting trees, burnt two police stations, two sub-registrar's offices, thirteen post-offices, seventeen excise shops, and arrested thirteen Government officials. People's arbitration courts seemed to have become quite popular among the masses. The parallel law courts tried 2,907 cases, of which, 1,681 were disposed of. Fines imposed by the court on 523 persons amounted to Rs. 33,937-15-0. This money was later spent on relief work. The Bengal Government admitted that thirteen officials were kidnapped by the rebels.⁶⁶ ,

In September 1944, the Bengal Government declared the "Jatiya Sarkar" as an unlawful association under Section 16 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. Three platoons of the Eastern Frontier Rifles were inducted to mop up the guerillas.⁶⁷ The police and the troops resorted to large-scale atrocities on civilians in this region. The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee reported that in the Tamluk sub-division the police had burnt 124 and looted 1,044 houses. An old popular lady of seventy-three years was shot dead. Planes were used to machinegun the rebels. The Government detained 5,076 people without trial. The Bengal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha in its enquiry report on Tamluk and Contai mentioned that 9,044 women were arrested and 274 raped.

The people of Midnapore also suffered during this time due to a severe cyclonic storm which caused widespread flood and damage. The Government did not allow any news regarding these events to be known to the outside world. Neither did it allow any non-official relief organization to

65. Home Political File Nos. 18/3/43, 18/6/43, 18/11/43 and 18/3/44, Fortnightly reports, Bengal, March, June, November 1943 and March 1944.

66. Home Political File No. 3/22/45; also *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20 December 1945.

67. Home Political File No. 18/9/44. Fortnightly report, Bengal, September 1944.

operate there. Of course, relief was officially provided, but only to the loyalists. The Hindu Mahasabha report alleged : "The District Magistrate submitted in writing a report to the Government that relief, whether organized by the Government or by a private agency, should be withheld for a month and thereby people taught a permanent lesson. He also acted literally according to this policy."⁶⁸

Official indifference towards relief forced Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, President of the All India Hindu Mahasabha, to quit the Bengal cabinet. The Bengal Government, however, dismissed his allegations as "highly exaggerated versions of minor incidents." As regards delay in providing relief measures to the affected people, the note blamed Nature for causing "unforeseen difficulties" for the Government.⁶⁹

Natural calamity combined with official repression to suppress the movement. Following Gandhi's release "the Jatiya Sarkar" was dissolved on 8 August 1944.⁷⁰

VI

The underground resistance movement was also active in U.P. and Delhi. In U.P., Banaras, the headquarters of the Congress Socialist party, became the centre for setting up underground cells all over the province. But this organizational network did not expand according to expectations. The principal organizer of the resistance movement was Baba Raghav Das of Gorakhpur. He was assisted by Dr. Swami Nath and Chandra Sekhar Asthana, a professor of Kashi Vidyapith. Banaras in those days was often selected as the venue for the meetings of all India leaders of the underground resistance movement. In the middle of May 1943, an important meeting of the Congress Socialist party also took place there. Other active centres of the movement in U.P. were Ballia, Ghazipur, Azamgarh, Jaunpur, Sultanpur, Partabgarh, Gorakhpur, Cawnpore, Allahabad, Lucknow and Agra.⁷¹

68. Home Political File No. 3/22/45.

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20 December 1945

71. Home Political File No. 3/68/43.

On 7 February 1943, some students of the Banaras Hindu University, under the guidance of Chandra Sekhar Asthana, Jai Chand Vidyalkar, Chunilal Sharma and Priyaranjan Prasad Sinha, all of them ex-students of the University, set fire to the Indian Air Force hangar and the M.G.O. office ; the former was partly burnt, the latter was completely gutted. There was also an unsuccessful attempt to set fire to the Banaras Hindu University Registrar's office. The activists also made concerted, but vain, attempts at breaking the Hardoi jail to secure the release of the Congress Socialist leaders.⁷²

The police arrested some important underground leaders, such as Ambika Singh (Jaunpur), Sambhunath Chaturvedi, Deputy Superintendant of Police who had renounced government service, Dr. Kaushalya Nand Gairola of Banaras Hindu University, Kailashpati Mishra, Keshav Deo Malaviya and Purnima Bannerjee. The last one was arrested in Bombay in June 1944.⁷³ Soon thereafter, the underground resistance movement collapsed.

After Bombay, Delhi proved to be the second biggest bomb manufacturing centre. Here the resisters had even named the bomb-making ingredients after the names of Congress leaders, such as, Subhas blasting jelly, Jawahar grenade, Gandhi blasting stick, etc.⁷⁴ The police seized a large amount of ammunition from two places in Karol Bagh and Bazar Sitaram. The stock consisted of 186 gelignite sticks, 183 detonators, 1,200 feet of fuse, 30 lbs. of gun powder, 46 empty cast iron containers designed for bombs, a large quantity of chemicals, and some documents. The police arrested one Madan Lal and Radhe Syam Sharma, an ex-professor of Banaras Hindu University, in this connection. But the latter was soon released owing to lack of evidence.⁷⁵

The underground resistance movement made little headway in Assam and Orissa. In other provinces, there was absolutely no organization at all.

72. *Ibid.*

73. Home Political File Nos. 18/9/42, 18/2/44 and 18/6/44, Fortnightly reports, U.P., September 1942, February and June 1944.

74. Home Political File No. 18/1/43, Fortnightly report, Delhi, January 1943.

75. Home Political File No. 3/6/43.

VII

At the beginning of the revolutionary period, the Congress Socialist Party was successful in building up a facade of unity and solidarity of all the underground activists. But the fabric was never a solid one. The presence of too many discordant and heterogeneous elements produced cracks in the structure. The cracks did not appear immediately, because all the schools of thought whether believing in violence or non-violence, decided to work together in the beginning.

It may be asked as to why the rightist elements within the Congress agreed to play the second fiddle to the Congress Socialists in the underground resistance movement, and why the AICC allowed itself to be guided by the Central Directorate which was dominated by the Socialists. It seems Gandhi himself had shown sympathy with Socialists during the pre-August days of 1942 and even earlier.⁷⁶ He certainly had not disfavoured the growing hostility of the Socialists towards the British regime. This attitude of Gandhi naturally lent credibility to the Socialists. Moreover, Gandhi's declaration of 8 August 1942

76. When the British authorities in India tried to defame Jayaprakash Narayan by publishing the letters which he was trying to smuggle out of the Deoli detention camp in October 1941, and in which he had asked his Socialist friends to prepare for underground action, Gandhi came out with a statement which, while expressing his disapproval of all violent activities, praised Jayaprakash Narayan. "Frankly", Gandhi said, "all nationalist forces . . . are at war with the Government. And, according to the accepted canon of war, the method adopted by Jayaprakash Narayan is perfectly legitimate . . ." Home Political File No. 43/96/41. Also D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma 1940-45 Vol. 6* (New Delhi, 1962), p. 12.

Again on 15 July 1943, Gandhi wrote to the Additional Home Secretary, Government of India : " . . . he differs from me on several fundamentals. But my differences, great as they are, do not blind me to his indomitable courage and his sacrifice of all that a man holds dear for the love of his country. I have read his manifesto which is given as an appendix to the indictment. (*Congress Responsibility For the Disturbances 1942-43*). Though I cannot subscribe to some of the views expressed therein, it breathes nothing but burning patriotism and his impatience of foreign domination. It is virtue of which any country would be proud." Pyarelal (Comp.), *Gandhi's Correspondence with the Government 1942-44*, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1945), edn. 2, p. 186.

that it would be an "open rebellion" could easily be interpreted to mean a revolution. The political atmosphere in the country was rendered particularly conducive to such an interpretation by the sudden arrest of Gandhi and other Congress leaders ; and even the rightist elements felt so bitter as to join the Congress Socialists without very many inhibitions. Finally, among the leaders who had escaped arrest, there was none in the right wing who possessed either the stature or the capacity to lead the movement. In these circumstances, the leadership passed smoothly into the hands of the Congress Socialist party, whose top leaders had escaped arrest and were determined to continue the struggle.⁷⁷

The Central Directorate also took the care not to show its teeth all too soon, and refrained, for some time, from showing its preference for violence. It succeeded in convincing the rightist elements that it was not in favour of violence. The early pamphlets of the AICC^{*} (which had in reality been produced by the Central Directorate) bore the imprint of this strategy. Whenever they had to advocate an extremist line, they skillfully used quotations from Gandhi to support their news. Their pamphlets, too were couched substantially in Gandhian phraseology. The Socialists also succeeded in wresting leadership from the right wing in many provinces. Thus carefully consolidating their own position at the centre and at the provincial level, they proceeded gradually to show an open inclination for violence. The dramatic emergence of Jayaprakash Narayan, the general Secretary of the Congress Socialist party, further tilted the balance in favour of the leftist group. His participation in the movement emboldened the Central Directorate to launch the scheme of revolutionary guerilla warfare. It was at this stage that the orthodox group began to raise doubts about the Gandhian nature of the plans of the AICC.

For the first time the orthodox Gandhian group raised ideological objections to some underground activities of the

77. It was S.K. Patil who observed in October 1944 : "...99 per cent of Congressmen who remained behind after the arrest of prominent leaders did not know what exactly they were expected to do. This is the reason why they accepted, without critical examination, any guidance that came from anywhere and from any person whether authorised or competent to give it or not." File No. P-7/1942-46 AICC, Nehru Memorial Museum.

Directorate at its meeting in Delhi on December 1942. The Congress Socialist party, realising that the political situation had changed and its own position had weakened, suggested an ingenious compromise. It agreed to follow two programmes simultaneously : one would include the old orthodox Congress items, and the other would go for "a new phase of sabotage" in the country.⁷⁸

It was during the twenty-one day fast of Gandhi in February 1943, that the rightist leaders began to feel uncomfortable in the company of the Socialists, and became apprehensive that they were doing disservice to Gandhian ideals. Sucheta Kripalani, with the help of a Government official, met Gandhi and told him of her activities since his arrest. Gandhi told her that he disapproved of the violent activities carried on in the name of Congress. After the termination of the fast, Sadiq Ali met Gandhi and apprised him of the existing situation. Gandhi said that he did not like to express "dissatisfaction or otherwise with what individuals were doing as he had told them they could act as free men, but as far as he himself was concerned, he disapproved of secret methods and activities involving violence." Convinced of the necessity to part company with his Socialist colleagues, Sadiq Ali decided to engage himself in constructive work in U. P.⁷⁹ Unlike Sucheta Kripalani and Sadiq Ali, the hard-core Socialist leaders, though troubled by Gandhi's fast, were not prepared to give up their activities. On the contrary, Gandhi's fast provided a leverage to them to mount their pressure on the masses to increase the intensity of the movement. In an appeal to the business community, they said in February 1943 ⁸⁰:

78. Home Political File No. 4/4/44.

79. Home Political File No. 3/70/43.

80. Home Political File No. 3/25/43. Appealing to the people to launch a revolutionary campaign, a Bombay Bulletin of 11 February 1943 said : "Let our merchants treat these three weeks of his fast as a daily reminder that upon his life he has changed us to do our humble best. Let the markets and bazars close down, let schools and colleges be emptied. Let the workers come out of their factories on the roads in eloquent veneration of our great leader's challenge." The Bulletin, however, asked the people not be swayed from the path of Ahimsa. Home Political File No. 3/81/43.

"It is acts alone that can speak Let your actions proclaim that Indian trade and Industry, Indian Business and Banking, Indian Insurance and Commerce all unite, to disassociate themselves from the rule of terror that is enthroned at Delhi. Let the whole people unite in one gigantic deadlock which will wipe away the shame and ignominy that alien captors have heaved upon our unfortunate land."

Stressing the importance of a pervasive and permanent boycott and non-co-operation movement against the British, the appeal exhorted a hundred thousand "Do or Die" men to paralyze British administration by non-violent assaults.⁸¹ Railway staff were asked to damage the communication instruments; Ekka and Tongawallas and cooks were asked to boycott police and Englishmen; shopkeepers were asked to observe *hartals*.⁸² Ridiculing the efforts of the Non-Party Leaders' Conference to obtain Gandhi's immediate release, the Central Directorate characterised them as "another expensive exhibition of their helplessness", "a continuation of the discredited traditions of slavery" and "prayerful inaction." It was meaningless to knock their heads against the wall of Imperial greed and lust for power. "They [non-party leaders] dug deep in the soil, but got not a drop of the life-giving water of liberty and free thought."⁸³

The differences between the two groups had come to the surface now. The Gandhian group soon decided to call a meeting of the Central Directorate in Bombay to fight out the issue. In the conclave the line-up was clear and distinct. The pro-violence group comprised Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammanohar Lohia, Achyut Patvardhan and Aruna Asaf Ali; the pro-non-violence group was represented by Sucheta Kripalani and Sadiq Ali. There was an animated discussion on the issue of continuance of violence. The upshot was that Jayaprakash Narayan agreed to suspend the violent movement

81. Home Political File No. 3/26/43.

82. Home Political File No. 18/2/43, Fortnightly report, Bengal, February 1943.

83. Home Political File No. 3/26/43.

for a period of two to three months.⁸⁴ This climb down on the part of the Congress Socialists represented a sincere effort to soothe the feelings of the Gandhian group and to avoid an immediate showdown. The leftists knew that any split at that moment would adversely affect the prospect of the underground resistance movement. They decided to have a temporary truce, hoping to be able to convert the other group in the meanwhile.

But the breach could not be healed. A desperate Achyut Patvardhan wrote to Jayaprakash Narayan: "Sucheta is turning a priest."⁸⁵ A month later, the right wing leaders held a meeting at Banaras on 23 May 1943. The leaders present were Sucheta Kripalani, Baba Raghav Das and Dwarkanath Kachru; only Aruna Asaf Ali represented the leftist group. This meeting discussed the possibility of reviving the constructive programme of the Congress in the existing circumstances.⁸⁶

The growing difference between the Congress Socialists and the right wing leaders became more marked when both the sides went on to issue two separate programmes for the celebration of the first anniversary of 9 August in 1943. The AICC (the right wing group) issued its programme to all the Provincial Congress Committees. According to this programme there would be a *Gandhi Yatra* (*Satyagraha* march) on 9 August to the place of Gandhi's detention, i.e., the Aga Khan's Palace, Poona. The *satyagrahis* would be from all over India. In the district headquarters and other towns also, there would be *Yatras* to their respective jails to protest against the Government's repressive policy. Besides, there would be general *hartal* on 9 August, students' *hartal* for three days, collective spinning, hoisting of Congress flag and processions and meetings in all the places.⁸⁷

In sharp contrast, the Socialists wanted to observe 9 August as the New Year's Day of the Indian revolutionaries. They also termed it as the August Rebellion Day. Their programme included mass demonstrations and strikes, attacks on government officials, throwing of bombs at police stations and other acts of violence. They, however, affirmed that violence

84. Home Political File No. 4/4/44.

85. *Ibid.*

86. Home Political File No. 3/70/43.

87. Home Political File No. 3/68/43.

would be used "only in retaliation for violence used by the police and the military against the satyagrahis."⁸⁸

The proposed *Gandhi Yatra* of the right-wing Congress was not a success. About 128 volunteers could reach Poona, and they were immediately arrested. There were partial *hartals* in most of the towns. Schools and colleges were on strike for some days. A few bomb explosions took place in Bombay on August.⁸⁹

Among the provincial Congress Committees, Karnatak was the first to raise objections to the issuing of literature by the underground activists in the name of the provincial Congress Committee. The provincial leaders (the Gandhian group) were even thinking of issuing a disclaimer if any worker or workers advocated any action in the name of the provincial committee. To avoid a clash, the underground resisters agreed to stop issuing instructions for the time being. The Karnatak committee took the decision that sabotage even in stray cases must cease. It was further suggested that the people who indulged in sabotage should be openly condemned and should receive no support or aid from any Congress worker or sympathiser.⁹⁰

Karnatak's example strengthened the hands of the Gandhian group to demand a break from the Central Directorate. Since the Bombay meeting, the rift had been rapidly growing. Finally in September 1943, the Gandhian group decided to break away, and Sucheta Kripalani resigned from the Central Directorate.⁹¹

The formation of a new group called the "All India Satyagraha Council" sealed the split in the underground resistance movement. The organizational set up of the new body was modelled on the same line as that of the Central Directorate. It was established mainly by the efforts of Sucheta Kripalani. The other important leaders of the organization were Ananda Prasad Chaudhary of Bengal, R.R. Diwakar of Bombay, G. Ramachandran of Madras, Baldeo Narain Verma of Bihar and R.S. Dhotre of the All India Spinners' Association.

88. *Ibid.*

89. Home Political File No. 35/5/43.

90. Home Political File No. 3/85/43.

91. Home Political File No. 4/4/44.

Their activities were largely confined to the Provinces of Bengal, Bihar, Bombay and Madras.⁹²

The reasons for the formation of the new organization were explained by Ananda Prasad Chaudhary in a pamphlet, *All India Satyagraha Council—What we stand for*. He stated that Congressmen, who had the unalterable conviction that *satyagraha* was the basis of their struggle, should do nothing that would weaken the concept of *satyagraha* and its discipline. The object of the organization was to evolve, by mutual consultation and planning, programmes of struggle which would prepare the Indian masses ultimately for an open nation-wide non-violent revolution that would paralyse the whole machinery of the Government and replace it by a people's government.⁹³

Having the same end in view, the All India Satyagraha Council and the Central Directorate were divided by the adoption of different means. 'While the former stood for open, non-violent defiance of the authorities, the latter wanted to organize secret sabotage and guerilla warfare. The Council wanted to follow the orthodox Gandhian means, the Directorate found violence necessary.

The Council, in the beginning, was eager to establish its militancy. It spread the idea that the masses should organize "open successive raids" on the usurper Government without inflicting any injury or violence to anyone. This programme immediately became controversial. It put the rank and file in a quandary. They were divided on the issue of a future programme. One group was in favour of defying the authorities on all the issues. The other group was in favour of rendering co-operation to the Government particularly on the food front. Again, one group was in favour of launching individual *satyagraha*, and another was in favour of complete cessation of agitational activities.⁹⁴ Because of these internal conflicts, the All India Satyagraha Council could not grow into a powerful organization.

The formation of the Satyagraha Council spread confusion among the rank and file underground workers also, for they did not know whom to follow. On 9 May 1944, Nagindas

92. *Ibid.*

93. *Ibid.*

94. Home Political File No. 3/85/43.

T. Master, president of Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, issued a strongly worded private warning to Congress workers to sever all contact with Congress Socialists, and particularly stressed the need to avoid distribution of any literature without his prior approval. He was considerably disturbed to discover that the Congress machinery was supplying funds for the use of underground workers. He was at that time engaged in an enquiry regarding funds handed over to such leaders as Achyut Patvardhan and Rammanohar Lohia.⁹⁵ The All India Satyagraha Council, in its circular of 13 May 1944, stated that "all aggressive programmes should stand suspended till such time as Gandhi made his mind clear on the present position." Further modification of their stand became apparent in their programme for observance of 9 August 1944. This time only flag hoisting, *prabhat pheries*, spinning demonstrations, and meetings for recitation of the August resolution were included.⁹⁶ On the other hand, the Central Directorate's programme included such items as the observance of a general strike, violation of ban orders, non-selling of food grains to the Government, boycotting of prize-bonds, and fomenting of discontent in the army in order to win over their sympathy for the nationalist cause.⁹⁷

Although the All India Satyagraha Council was supposedly following Gandhian policy, in actuality it was also functioning like an underground organization. In any case, arrest of leaders like Sucheta Kripalani, R.R. Diwakar, Ananda Prasad Chaudhury and Baba Raghav Das in 1944 served a mortal blow to the organization.⁹⁸ It had enjoyed only a brief spell of life and even during that period it could hardly implement any items of its programme. In fact, its very existence caused great harm to the underground resistance movement.

Though Gandhi did not openly admonish the Congress Socialist party or its votaries for their role in the recent drama, he privately expressed his displeasure after his release from jail in May 1944. This attitude of Gandhi pained many underground resisters. They might have been expecting a few words

95. Home Political File No. 18/5/44, Fortnightly report, Bombay, May 1944.

96. Home Political File No. 3/28/44.

97. Home Political File No. 3/2/44.

98. Home Political File No. 4/4/44.

of praise from Gandhi, though not a full endorsement of their methods. But Gandhi had put them in the dock. They felt sullen and sad. But they were not apologetic. They were convinced of the rightness of their cause. When, on 9 June 1944, Gandhi advised Aruna Asaf Ali, to surrender to the police, she replied : "We wish to abide by your orders ; but it is revolting to our self respect, pride and patriotism to submit to the humiliation of surrendering to the British police." However, she agreed to suspend all violent activities in accordance with Gandhi's wishes.⁹⁹

Gandhi's closed door admonitions created a psychological depression and a mood of defeatism among the participants of the underground movement. The underground leaders had also to face much mud-slinging, character-maligning and personal vilification from lesser persons. The resultant strain was pathetic. With poignant pathos did Aruna Asaf Ali convey to Gandhi the sad disillusionment of these people¹⁰⁰ :

Like driftwood, caught in stagnant waters, rootless, banished from all spiritual moorings, life becomes worthless and meaningless—that is how one feels these days. There was a time when we of the August Revolt thought and felt like gods—we know now that we were perhaps no better than impetuous romantics. The realists were right. They did not lose their head and were unaffected by your call to throw out the foreigner. They were wise and are therefore, reaping the fruits of wisdom. They have had the best of all the worlds... We know ours is the voice of lost souls that championed a lost cause. Ghosts from a past that is now thoroughly in disrepute, we are apt to become a nuisance ..

Jayaprakash Narayan, the main architect of the underground resistance, more aggressively bitter, noted in his jail diary on 5 August 1944¹⁰¹ :

99. Aruna Asaf Ali's letter to Mahatma Gandhi, *Nehru Papers*, Nehru Memorial Museum. Their correspondence continued from 4 June 1944 to 8 August 1945. Aruna Asaf Ali was most of the time in Bombay ; yet the police could not detect and arrest her.

100. *Ibid.*

101. Jayaprakash Narayan, *In the Lahore Fort* (Patna, 1947), pp. 81-2.

A revolution is disowned because it failed... I feel bitter because I find we have been badly let down—not I personally, because I openly preached violence and was therefore, prepared in the event of failure for severe censure and excommunication. But thousands, rather lakhs, of Indian patriots, have been let down... Those thousands of unknown soldiers of independence who participated in the stirring events of 1942 did not stop to consider whether the upheaval that caught them in its surge and flung them onward was technically, in accordance with the niceties of political formulae, a Congress movement or not. It was sufficient for them to know that their leader had declared an “open rebellion.”

The situation somewhat changed following the release of the members of the Congress Working Committee on 15 June 1945.¹⁰² Unlike Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel came out openly in support of the Quit India movement. On 30 August 1945, Nehru openly confessed : “I am prepared to take all responsibility for the happenings of 1942 because I am responsible for creating these conditions in the country.”¹⁰³ Again, on 15 September 1945, he described the 1942 struggle as the people’s spontaneous movement and raised the masses for doing things on their own initiative.¹⁰⁴ These speeches must have soothed the thousands of underground workers who were feeling let down and disowned by the leadership.

The Congress Working Committee, however, left no doubt about its disapproval of the methods inculcated by the Socialists. Its resolution on the Quit India movement, adopted in Calcutta in December 1945, stated that after the arrest of principal Congressmen the unguided masses took the reins in their own hands and acted almost spontaneously. Though heroic, many acts were committed which could not be considered non-violent. The Working Committee, therefore, reaffirmed that the policy of non-violence adopted by the Congress in 1920 continued unabated, and that such non-

102. N N. Mitra, ed., *The Indian Annual Register* (Calcutta, n.d.), vol. 1, 1945, p. 72.

103. *Idid*, vol. 2, 1945, p. 12.

104. Home Political File No. 18/9/45, Fortnightly report, Bombay, September 1945.

violence did not include burning of public property, cutting of telegraph wires, derailing trains and intimidation.¹⁰⁵

This seemingly unconscionable act of the Congress naturally hurt the Socialists. Two of them, Achyut Patvardhan and Aruna Asaf Ali, felt constrained to protest in an open letter to Congress president¹⁰⁶ :

We submit, the Working Committee have done less than justice to their own good name for undaunted partisanship of freedom's cause by dismissing the momentous events of the past three years as a series of impulsive and heroic, albeit undirected aberrations. We remain unconvinced of our error although we may recognise the average element of mistakes which persists in all organizational executive efforts.

They also questioned "the propriety of this summary judgement upon the complex events of the past three years." This resolution, they emphasised, was bound to be interpreted as a reflection on their alleged lapse from the path of duty in the struggle for freedom. They demanded the vindication not only of their self-respect but also of the respect that their point of view deserved.¹⁰⁷

The Indian National Congress remained adamant. Unofficially, however, most of the Congress leaders came out in praise of the underground movement. And before long, the Socialist leaders emerged from prison as heroes in the eyes of the general public, the Congress Working Committee's resolution notwithstanding.

Working against heavy odds and with limited resources, the Socialists had not been able to achieve much by way of results. They had even failed to establish a strong or lasting organization. But by their acts of courage and defiance they had kept alive the Quit India movement much longer than it would have otherwise lasted. They had not strictly followed the old techniques of struggle ; instead they had organized a cadre of armed fighters, and planned a chain of armed struggles in various parts of the country. Even the limited success they

105. Mitra, n. 102, vol. 2, 1945, p. 100.

106. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 18 January 1946.

107. *Ibid.*

had achieved was significant. For it gave the British a foretaste of things to come if the Indian problem was not settled to the satisfaction of the Indian people. This was the most significant contribution the underground resistance movement made to the country's march towards freedom.

5

GANDHI'S FAST AND AFTER

BESIDES the mass upsurge and the underground resistance movement, there was a third dimension of the Quit India movement ; the fight carried on by Gandhi himself from the Aga Khan's Palace where he was imprisoned. He carried on a valiant struggle for the vindication of truth, staking even his life in the true spirit of a *satyagrahi*.

Ironically, the starting point of Gandhi's struggle was his contention that it was not he but the Government's hasty action in arresting the Congress leaders which had precipitated the crisis. "The Government of India," Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy within less than a week of his confinement at the Aga Khan's Palace, "should have waited at least till the time that I inaugurated mass action." Instead, he was not even permitted to write the letter which he had publicly stated he would write to the Viceroy. This was intended to be an appeal for an impartial examination of the Congress case. Obviously the Government was "afraid that the extreme caution and gradualness with which the Congress was moving towards direct action, might make world opinion veer round to the Congress as it had already begun doing, and expose the hollowness of grounds for the Government rejection of the Congress demand."¹

1. M.K. Gandhi to Linlithgow, 14 August 1942, Pyarelal (Comp.), *Gandhi's Correspondence with the Government 1942-44* (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1945), edn. 2, pp. 15-20. Also *Correspondence with Mr. Gandhi. August 1942—April 1944* (New Delhi, Government of India, 1944), pp. 2-3

Gandhi went on to demolish every point in the Government of India's resolution of 8 August 1942 in which it had given a garbled version of the Congress position in order to justify the Government's action. He denied having contemplated violence at any stage. The purpose of the proposed movement was "to evoke in the people the measure of sacrifice sufficient to control attention. Gandhi characterized as "a gross libel" against "the oldest national organization of India" the Government's contention that Congress was not the mouthpiece of the country. As for the official contention that the Government could not have taken any risk in regard to its war effort, the Congress, too, was interested in the protection of the freedom of China and Russia. But they proceeded on different premises : "The Government of India think that freedom of India is not necessary for winning the cause. I think exactly the opposite." Claiming to be a friend of the British people, Gandhi pleaded for a reconsideration of the Government's policy² :

If notwithstanding the common cause, the Government's answer to the Congress demand is hasty repression, they will not wonder if I draw the inference that it was not so much the Allied cause that weighed with the British Government, as the unexpressed determination to cling to the possession of India as an indispensable part of imperial policy. This determination led to the rejection of the Congress demand and precipitated repression.

The present mutual slaughter on a scale never before known to history is suffocating enough. But the slaughter of truth accompanying the butchery and enforced by the falsity of which the resolution is reeking adds strength to the Congress position.

Writing to Gandhi on 22 August, the Viceroy, curtly refused to accept either Gandhi's criticisms of the Government's action or his suggestion for a reconsideration of official policy. Gandhi was undeterred. He reiterated the charge in his communication of 23 September, and emphasised that Congress continued to be wedded to non-violence. "The wholesale arrests of the Congress leaders," he wrote, "seemed

to have made the public wild with rage to the point of losing self-control. I feel that the Government, not the Congress, are responsible for the destruction that has taken place." He now put in concrete terms his suggestion regarding reconsideration by the Government of its "whole policy": "The only right course for the Government seems to me to be to release the Congress leaders, to withdraw all repressive measures and explore ways and means of conciliation."³

The Government was unrepentant. It did not even acknowledge Gandhi's letter, and reinvigorated its propaganda that the Congress was responsible for the disturbances. Gandhi thought over the matter for more than three months, and came to the conclusion that under the circumstances he had to undertake a fast in order to vindicate his honesty. The decision was conveyed to the Viceroy through "a very personal letter" on the last day of the year 1942. Stating that he had given himself six months and that his patience was drawing to a close, Gandhi wrote: "The law of satyagraha as I know it prescribes a remedy in such moments of trial. In a sentence it is, 'crucify the flesh by fasting.' That same law forbids its use except as a last resort." He had to be sure that the last resort had become indispensable. So he implored the Viceroy: "Convince me of my error or errors, and I shall make ample amends. You can send for me or send some one who knows your mind and can carry conviction. There are many other ways if you have the will."⁴

But the Viceroy was unimpressed by Gandhi's sincerity. He thought that Gandhi, uneasy and uncertain about his position, was carrying on this correspondence with a view to bringing the spotlight on himself and on the Congress. Gandhi's object, according to the Viceroy was to regain the initiative and to ascertain how far the Government was going to take a tough line. Linlithgow decided to keep the ball in Gandhi's court. "I must on the one hand," he told the Secretary of State, "avoid the appearance of closing the door and precipitating a

3. M.K. Gandhi to Linlithgow, 23 September 1942, *ibid.*, pp. 21-2; also *Correspondence with Mr. Gandhi*, n. 1, pp. 3-4.

4. M.K. Gandhi to Linlithgow, New Year's Eve, 1942, *Gandhi's Correspondence*, n. 1, pp. 23-5.

crisis for which we would plausibly be made responsible, and on the other the exposing of surface, or to giving Gandhi the excuse of starting a desultory correspondence''⁵

But the War Cabinet was opposed to such a correspondence with Gandhi. Since, however, the Viceroy was determined to follow a contrary course, the Cabinet had to agree. Linlithgow's was a tactical move to defeat Gandhi in his own game. Nevertheless, Linlithgow was not confident enough to carry on the correspondence without any advice or guidance. He apologised to Amery for deluging him with telegrams and representations about Gandhi's correspondence, but added that it was a delicate and difficult job.⁶

The Government of India permitted Gandhi to read newspapers, expecting that Gandhi would come out with a categorical denunciation of the activities of the rebels in August-September 1942. In his letter to Gandhi dated 13 January 1943, the Viceroy expressed great disappointment that Gandhi had not thought it fit to condemn this rash of violence, more so because "a heavy responsibility" for it rested on him. Linlithgow added that if Gandhi was prepared to retrace his steps and disassociate himself from the earlier policy he had only to let the Viceroy know and the latter would "at once consider the matter further."⁷

This evasive letter, the Viceroy confessed to the Secretary of State, deliberately missed Gandhi's main points in order "to make him show his hand a little further," without giving "him much room to move." The important thing was "to avoid parleying with him or giving him an excuse for that hair-splitting correspondence at which he is so expert."⁸

Unaware of the game the Viceroy was playing, Gandhi wrote back, on 19 January 1943, asking to be put in touch with the members of the Congress Working Committee before he could make any positive suggestions for ending the impasse.

5. Linlithgow to Amery, 4 January 1943, Nicholas Mansergh (Ed.), *The Transfer of Power, 1942-7, Vol. 3, 21 September 1942—12 June 1943* (London, 1971), pp. 449-50.

6. Linlithgow to Amery, 7 February 1943. *ibid.*, p. 609.

7. Linlithgow to M.K. Gandhi, 13 January 1943, *Gandhi's Correspondence*, n. 1. pp. 25-6.

8. Linlithgow to Amery, 6 January 1943, Mansergh, n. 5, p. 461.

Gandhi, however, stuck to the charge that it was the Government which was responsible for all that had happened in August-September 1942.⁹ He elaborated it more eloquently in his letter of 29 January 1943 to the Viceroy¹⁰ :

I see the fact of the murderers as clearly, I hope, as you do. My answer is that the Government goaded the people to the point of madness. They started leonine violence in the shape of the arrests already referred to. That violence is not any the less so, because it is organized on a scale so gigantic that it displaces the Mosaic law of tooth for tooth by that of ten thousand for one—not to mention the corollary of the Mosaic law, i.e., of non-resistance as enunciated by Jesus Christ. I cannot interpret in any other manner the repressive measures of the all-powerful Government of India.

But the Viceroy knew his mind, and there was no chance for Gandhi to make a dent in the carefully planned official policy by sheer eloquence and demonstration of righteousness. It was natural, therefore, that his request for being permitted to communicate with the CWC should be rejected. Gandhi, consequently, felt obliged to undertake a twenty-one day fast ; there no longer was an alternative to "the last resort." The fast was to commence on 9 February 1943. Since his intention was not to die, "but to survive the ordeal, if God so wills," Gandhi decided to take water with juices of citrus fruits during the fast. Two days before the commencement of the ordeal, Gandhi made a stirring confession of faith to the British pro-consul¹¹ :

You have left me no loophole for escaping the ordeal I have set before for myself. I begin it on 9th instant with the clearest possible conscience. Despite your description of it as "a form of political blackmail," it is on my part meant to be an appeal to the Highest Tribunal for justice which I have failed to secure from you. If I do not

9. M.K. Gandhi to Linlithgow, 19 January 1943, *Gandhi's Correspondence*, n. 1, pp. 27-9.

10. M.K. Gandhi to Linlithgow, 29 January 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 31-3 ; also, *Correspondence with Mr. Gandhi*, n. 1, pp. 8-9.

11. M.K. Gandhi to Linlithgow, 7 February 1943, *Gandhi's Correspondence*, n. 1, pp. 38-41.

survive the ordeal I shall go to the Judgment seat with the fullest faith in my innocence. Posterity will judge between you as representative of an all-powerful Government and me as a humble man who had tried to serve his country and humanity through it.

II

Gandhi's decision to go on a fast did not come as a surprise to the Government. Official quarters had been speculating, even prior to August 1942, about such an eventuality in case Gandhi was arrested. Indeed the various pros and cons in that connection had already been discussed. Gandhi's deportation to Aden had been almost finalized by the War Cabinet. But Linlithgow had opposed it on the ground that "Were Gandhi following on a fast to die overseas, effect would be even worse than if that regrettable consequence were to take place while he was a free man in India."¹² It had, moreover, been decided at that time that in the event of Gandhi's death there would be no half-mast flags, though offices might be closed on that day.¹³ Such a prospect, however, had frightened the Governors of Bihar, Punjab, Bombay and C.P. They were apprehensive that Gandhi's death during incarceration would leave the Government friendless in India. They wanted the old man to be released, should he go on a fast.¹⁴

The Government of India decided to accept the operative part of this advice and to follow "the cat and mouse policy." Gandhi would be released for the duration of the fast and brought back to detention after its completion. The India Office, on the other hand, was opposed even to a temporary release. Amery did not mind if Gandhi died during the fast; all that had to be done was to keep back the news of his death for the time being.¹⁵ The War Cabinet endorsed this policy on 6 August 1942.¹⁶ Amery, however, permitted the Viceroy to

12. Linlithgow to Amery, 26 July 1942, Mansergh, n. 5, Vol. 2, *'Quit India,' 30 April—21 September 1942* (London), p. 462.

13. Linlithgow to Amery, 28 July 1942, *ibid.*, p. 489.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 637.

15. Amery to Linlithgow, 3 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 550.

16. War Cabinet's Minutes on Gandhi's fast, 6 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 588.

send Gandhi to the Sevagram Ashram immediately after the commencement of the fast ; but only after the place had been completely sequestered.¹⁷ But the Viceroy saw no sense in taking advantage of this concession.¹⁸

By 31 August 1942, the War Cabinet felt convinced that "the limited response to the revolutionary campaign of the Congress party had provided a practical demonstration that Congress did not represent the masses of Indian people." It decided to ignore the Congress and Gandhi totally. There was, moreover, the risk that Gandhi's release might be interpreted by the Congress circles as a victory in his struggle against the Government of India.¹⁹

On 30 September 1942, the Viceroy for the first time told the provincial Governors that Gandhi might decide to fast for the achievement of his "inadmissible demands." They were also informed that the Government would provide all medical facilities to him. Devadas Gandhi (Gandhi's youngest son) would be asked to take charge of all arrangements inside the Aga Khan's Palace. Gandhi would be permitted to see a reasonable number of personal friends, provided they agreed to execute a bond for maintaining secrecy about their talks with Gandhi.²⁰ The Bombay Governor, Roger Lumley, felt that "the reaction to Gandhi's death, from a fast, under detention, is going to be so formidable that we ought not to allow it to happen except under extreme circumstances." He did not think the Government's arrangements were workable. It was but an illusion to imagine that the Government would succeed in depriving Gandhi of publicity consequent on his fast which was found to make the front page news in the nationalist press. Lumley doubted if Devadas Gandhi would be willing to play the Government's game. Should Gandhi die, more troops would be required to meet the situation, and that would seriously affect the whole war effort.²¹

17. Amery to Linlithgow, 10 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 632.

18. Linlithgow to Amery, 16 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 719.

19. The minutes of the War Cabinet, 31 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 855.

20. Linlithgow to all provincial Governors, 30 September 1942, Mansergh, n. 5, Vol. 3, pp. 64-5.

21. R. Lumley (Bombay) to Linlithgow, 22 October 1942. *ibid.*, pp. 144-8.

Receiving such an adverse note from a senior Governor like Roger Lumley, Linlithgow decided to reopen the case of Gandhi's fast with the War Cabinet. For a brief while he toyed again with the idea of sending Gandhi to Aden or Africa, if he were to fast at a moment of real military difficulty.²² It seemed Linlithgow was now inclined to accept the view of some of his advisers that Gandhi's release at the point of danger to his life would not be regarded by the public as "a victory over the Government." "Indeed," he argued, "detention after reaching that stage would be punitive rather than preventive in character."²³ The War Cabinet, however, did not agree to release Gandhi in such a way. If anything, Gandhi could be released on compassionate grounds (*e.g.*, his age, health and the fact that he had already been detained for nearly six months), not because he was facing death due to fast.²⁴ Amery emphasised that to release Gandhi because of his threatened fast would be a clear tactical victory for the latter.²⁵

Linlithgow was in a dilemma. Personally, he would have preferred a tough line. But he knew that it would not be favoured by many of the provincial Governors as well as the majority of the Executive Councillors, particularly the Hindu members and the Home Member Reginald Maxwell himself. At the moment the opposition was so strong that the Viceroy decided not to sail against the wind. He appealed to the War Cabinet to accept his judgment in this respect.²⁶ Amery saw the Viceroy's dilemma and advocated his case before the Cabinet: "The handling of the situation seems to me essentially a matter in which the responsibility is that of the man on the spot and in which we must be guided by his judgment."²⁷ On 12 January 1943, the War Cabinet decided not to interfere with the considered judgement of the Viceroy—on whom lay the immediate responsibility for handling the situation.²⁸

22. Linlithgow to R. Lumley (Bombay), 31 October 1942, *ibid.*, p. 173; Lumley (Bombay) to Linlithgow, 4 November 1942, *ibid.*, p. 204.

23. Linlithgow to Amery, 22 December 1942, *ibid.*, p. 405.

24. Minutes of the War Cabinet, 7 January 1943, *ibid.*, p. 469.

25. Amery to Linlithgow, 8 January 1943, *ibid.*, p. 471.

26. Linlithgow to Amery, 11 January 1943, *ibid.*, p. 482.

27. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India to War Cabinet, 11 January 1943, *ibid.*, p. 485.

28. Minutes of the War Cabinet, 12 January 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 491-2.

There were three clear alternatives for the Government of India : (i) to allow Gandhi to fast unto death in confinement ; (ii) to release him when there was clear danger of death ; or (iii) to release him only for the period of the fast. There was no unanimous opinion in the Viceroy's Executive Council and the provincial Governors were equally divided. M. Hallett, Governor of U.P., was definitely against Gandhi's release. A considerable section believed that Gandhi's release would create an adverse effect on the Services and loyalists. On the contrary, the Viceroy felt that full weight had to be given to the "violence of popular emotion ; possible misrepresentation in Left wing press at home and in the United States ; and finally reactions inside my own Council."²⁹ The Bombay Governor reiterated that Gandhi should be released within a day or two of the commencement of the fast on the ground of danger to his life. To allow Gandhi to die in detention, he said, "would be very bad tactics and would permanently solidify opinion against us." Disagreeing with other Governors, he felt that Gandhi's release would not have an effect on Services and loyalists, and far from being treated as a victory over the Government, it would be received as a generous act.³⁰

Like the Governors, the members of the Executive Council were also divided on this issue. The Commander-in-Chief alone was prepared to support a tough line against Gandhi. Linlithgow was now prepared to see Gandhi's death in confinement ; that would remove an insuperable obstacle to India's constitutional progress.³¹ Finally the Executive Council adopted the line suggested by Feroze Khan Noon :

... that Gandhi should best be dealt with and deflated by intimation on evening before fast was due to begin that (a) Government could have nothing to do with this form of political blackmail for which they had the utmost abhorrence ; (b) that they could be no parties to his applying coercion by means of fast ; (c) that he would therefore be released, on starting a fast, for the period of

29. Linlithgow to all provincial Governors, 2 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 574 ; Linlithgow to Lumley (Bombay), 2 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 572 ; Linlithgow to Amery, 2 February 1942, *ibid.*, 570-1.

30. Linlithgow to Amery, 3 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 577.

31. Linlithgow to Amery, 8 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 639.

the fast, viz., 21 days (or less) on the understanding (d) that on its completion he would return to detention. No restriction would be imposed on Gandhi during this period, but he would not be allowed to have any discussion with the Government. He would be just like a man "on ticket of leave." Under the compulsion of carrying the Council with him, Linlithgow accepted this suggestion. He argued that "while this solution may be revolutionary it was best calculated to throw Gandhi out of his stride and secure us desired results."³² The Bombay Governor, too, accepted this proposal enthusiastically, for "Gandhi dead will be a greater menace than Gandhi at large." If it could be implemented, he believed, the proposal would reduce Gandhi's fast to a farce.³³

That was not to be. Gandhi was unlikely to oblige the Government by agreeing to play its game. Nor did London feel happy about this shift in policy. The War Cabinet was "gravely disturbed." It discerned in the draft declaration an impression of weakness which amounted to a surrender to Gandhi. Linlithgow was asked by Amery to override the decision of his Council.³⁴ Viewing the problem in the larger imperial perspective, Churchill stressed the urgency of disavowing the policy recommended by the Council. He wrote to the Viceroy³⁵ :

I earnestly hope you will weigh very carefully the overwhelming opinion of the War Cabinet and other Ministers concerned before consenting to a step which is contrary to your own better judgment and that of the Commander-in-Chief.. and which I fear would bring our whole government both in India and here at home into ridicule and thus could the magnificent work which you have done in these seven anxious years. I ask this as a friend and also because I am convinced that such an episode would be a definite injury to our war policy all over the world which is now moving forward victoriously after so many

32. Linlithgow to provincial Governors, 4 February 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 583-4.

33. Linlithgow to Amery, 5 February 1943. *ibid.*, pp. 586-7.

34. Minutes of the War Cabinet, 7 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 612 ; Amery to Linlithgow, 8 February 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 617-8.

35. Churchill to Linlithgow, 8 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 619.

perils have been surmounted by British resolution. For larger interests I bear the chief responsibility.

Even the resolution of the War Cabinet so forcefully conveyed by the Prime Minister could not persuade the Viceroy to overrule the Council. He told London that Gandhi's release would be merely a brief interruption of his confinement. Public reaction would thus be mitigated.³⁶ Churchill felt that the "hour of triumph everywhere in the world was not the time to crawl before a miserable little old man who had always been our enemy." But he decided against pressing beyond a point and submitted.³⁷ Amery also promised full support to the Viceroy.³⁸

The Government of India now felt free to offer to release Gandhi for the duration of his fast.³⁹ But Gandhi refused to be released "under false pretences."⁴⁰

Immediately after Gandhi's refusal, the Viceroy called an emergency meeting of the Executive Council, at midnight on 9 February 1943, to take a final decision on Gandhi. It failed to come to any decision in spite of long deliberations. Members like Homi Mody, N R. Sarkar, M.S. Aney, Jogendra Singh and Sultan Ahmed seemed determined to resign in case the Government decided to let Gandhi die in confinement. However, the majority of the members reached the consensus that in no case should the Government of India be "blackmailed" by Gandhi.⁴¹ In a press *communiqué* on 10 February 1943,

36. Linlithgow to Amery, 8 February 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 620-1.

37. Amery to Linlithgow, 8 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 632.

38. Amery wrote : "I shall support you all out, even if it means my breaking with the Government. I confess I get very fed up at times with a Cabinet which has no mind of its own and whose members are all terrified of saying anything which would draw Winston's displeasure upon their heads... Nothing has convinced me more than the Cabinet meetings of the last three years of the fundamental incapacity of a British Cabinet to try and govern India." Amery to Linlithgow, 8 February 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 632-6.

39. R. Tottenham's (Additional Home Secretary, Government of India) letter to M.K. Gandhi, 7 February 1943, *Gandhiji's Correspondence*, n. 1, pp. 44-5 : also *Correspondence with Mr. Gandhi*, n. 1, pp. 12-3.

40. M.K. Gandhi to R. Tottenham, 8 February 1943, *Gandhiji's Correspondence*, n. 1, pp. 49-50 ; also *Correspondence with Mr. Gandhi* n. 1, p. 13.

41. Linlithgow to Amery, 9 February 1943, *Mansergh*, n. 5, Vol. 3, p. 640.

the Government declared that it would neither be deflected from its policy nor accept the responsibility for the consequences of the fast for Gandhi's health.⁴² Thus, notwithstanding serious internal differences, Linlithgow finally resolved to carry out his own policy of letting Gandhi die in confinement.

III

Unlike sections of the Indian officialdom, the Indian people were stunned by the news of Gandhi's fast. An unprecedented emotional wave swept over the country. Hundreds of political prisoners immediately undertook "sympathetic fasts" which extended over periods varying from three to twenty-one days ; and the jail authorities had to administer artificial feeding.⁴³

Industrial and urban centres all over the country witnessed *hartals* for a duration of one to three days. In Bombay and Ahmedabad, all exchange markets stopped functioning till 24 February 1943. The fast had a disturbing effect on the industrial labour, particularly at Ahmedabad from where about 10,000 labourers migrated.⁴⁴ In Delhi, a retired police Inspector of the Punjab went on a sympathetic fast, and lost his pension. Seventh March 1943, the day when Gandhi completed his fast, was observed as a day of thanksgiving.⁴⁵ But that is to anticipate events.

As the fast proceeded, there developed a popular demand for saving "the precious life of the greatest saint of the age." It was argued that no risk was involved in releasing Gandhi ; for if the Government were prepared, as they must be, to meet the risk of disturbances in the event of his death, they should

42. Press *communique* of Government of India, 10 February 1943, *Gandhiji's Correspondence*, n, 1, pp. 51-5.

43. Home Political File Nos 18/2/43, Fortnightly reports, C.P., Bengal, U.P., Delhi, Bombay, February 1943, National Archives, New Delhi.

44. Home Political File No. 18/2/43, Fortnightly report, Bombay, February 1943.

45. Home Political File No 13/2/43, Fortnightly report, Delhi, February 1943.

be able more easily to quell any disturbance following his temporary liberation.⁴⁶ About the public reaction the Bombay Government stated : "The sight of an ascetic of 73 lying on his death-bed in prison as a result of an ordeal which he had imposed on himself in a fight with an overwhelmingly powerful political opponent evoked feelings of pity which admitted of no reasoning." It further added that Gandhi was seen more clearly in the public mind as a balancing factor between various forces that were pulling apart ; for instance, between capitalism and communism, or terrorism and constitutional agitation. His death would leave these contending forces free, and signalise even worse disorders than those for which he himself had been responsible.⁴⁷

Barring the Muslim League, all the political parties including the Hindu Mahasabha and the Communist party demanded Gandhi's immediate release. The Muslim League was afraid lest Gandhi's unconditional release should improve the image of the Congress. Jinnah declared that if the Government conceded Gandhi's demand under coercion, it would be tantamount to the sacrifice of the vital and paramount interests of Muslim India.⁴⁸ The Hindu Mahasabha's demand for Gandhi's immediate release was based on humanitarian considerations ; as such the Working Committee of the party made it clear that it could not accept "fasting as a political weapon used with a view to bring about constitutional changes and political revolution irrespective of their inherent merits or demerits."⁴⁹ The Communist Party of India also demanded Gandhi's release. Harry Pollitt, on behalf of the Communist Party of Great Britain, through a telegraphic message to the Viceroy, urged the release of Gandhi and other Congress leaders and the opening of negotiations with them to end the political deadlock. In another message to the Communist Party of India he asked

46. Home Political File No. 18/2/43, Fortnightly report, Bihar, February 1943.

47. Home Political File No. 18/2/43, Fortnightly report, Bombay, February 1943,

48. *The Statesman* (New Delhi), 16 February 1943. Also Home Political File No. 19/5/43.

49. *Ibid.*

it to work for Gandhi's release and the establishment of a National Government.⁵⁰

M.N. Roy, the leader of the Radical Democratic party, said that Gandhi's hunger-strike was "part of a well-laid plan." Its object was to help the Congress to "come out of its heavy defeat with the flying colours of a fraudulent victory." Roy held the opinion that the policy of appeasement had nearly ruined the country. "The olive branch," he believed, "having failed to elicit the desired response the Mahatma fell back on his non-violent pistol, which for once does not seem to have terrified the Government into a submission."⁵¹

Some higher ranking Indian officials were feeling uneasy that their careers would be in jeopardy in case the Government followed "a policy of appeasement" towards the Congress.⁵²

Gandhi's fast produced its reverberations within the four walls of the central Indian legislature also. The matter was raised in the Council of State (the Upper House) and the Central Assembly (the Lower House) on 15 February 1943 in the form of adjournment motions. Irrespective of their party affiliation, members showed concern for Gandhi's health. Barring a few Government spokesmen and Muslim League members, all demanded Gandhi's immediate and unconditional release. The Government, they pleaded, should rise above legal sophistry and considerations of prestige in order to prevent the crisis that would be produced if Gandhi's fast proved fatal. If emergency demanded, the Government should go in sack cloth and ashes to save this precious life. A member warned that "the consequences of anything which happens to Mahatma Gandhi will be terrible, terrible beyond words."⁵³ The Government, on the contrary, maintained that his unconditional release would again plunge the whole country into trouble ;

50. Devadas Gandhi (Comp.), *India Unreconciled* (New Delhi, 1943), p. 214.

51. *Sunday Observer* (Madras), 28 February 1943 ; also *ibid*.

52. Home Political File No. 18/2/43, Fortnightly report, U.P., February 1943.

53. See P.N. Saprú's speech, 15 February 1943, India, *Council of States Debates*, vol. 1, 1943, official report, session 1943, pp. 35-7. See also "motion for adjournment" discussion in the Central Assembly moved by Lakshmi Kanta Mairra, India, *The Legislation Assembly Debates*, vol. 1, 1943, official report, session 1943, cols 248-65.

for he might resume his revolutionary programme of action with a view to capturing power.⁵⁴

The Government of India was, indeed, determined not to be deflected from its chosen path. Linlithgow reassured Churchill : "I am not surprised but our flank march gave you some uneasiness. Such manoeuvres are apt to look more alarming from a distance. But we are fronting him (Gandhi) now, and in pretty good shape."⁵⁵ Among the provincial Governors, only Roger Lumley, the Bombay Governor, persisted in believing that Gandhi's death in detention would cause irreparable damage to British-Indian relations. Sharing the belief of senior European I.C.S. and police officials of his province, he believed that Gandhi's release would be a lesser evil than the long-term reactions which would follow his death in detention.⁵⁶ He again warned : Here, Gandhi is a religion to very large numbers of people, and ordinary standards of logic cannot be applied, where he is concerned, without grave risk."⁵⁷

Tremors shook even the Viceroy's Executive Council. From the outside most of the Indian Councillors had felt nervous at the prospect of Gandhi undertaking a fast ; and as early as 1 September 1942, Linlithgow informed Amery⁵⁸ :

... the sensitiveness of some of my Hindu colleagues may be gauged from the fact that when I discussed the business of a fast the other day in Council, and made it clear that

54 See Mahomed Usman's speech, 15 February 1943, India, *Council of State Debates*, vol. 1, 1943, official report, session 1943, pp. 41-3. Speaking in the Legislative Assembly, Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member, sarcastically expressed his understanding of the problem : "It seems to me that Mr. Gandhi's demand is rather like asking the United Nations to appoint Hitler to adjudge the responsibility for the present war. It is not usual in this country to put the accused person on the Bench to judge his own case." He further said : "but by declaring civil war, a method that repudiates the method of discussion, he [Gandhi] forfeits that right so long as he remains an open rebel... He cannot take part in public life under the protection of the law that he denies. He cannot be a citizen, and yet not a subject." India, *The Legislative Assembly Debates*, vol. 1-2, official report, session 1943, cols 260-2.

55. Linlithgow to Churchill, 10 February 1943, Mansergh, n. 5, vol. 3, p. 650.

56. Lumley to Linlithgow, 16 February 1943, *ibid.*

57. Lumley to Linlithgow, 4 March 1943, *ibid.*, p. 755.

58. Linlithgow to Amery, 1 September 1942, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 870.

I contemplated the old man dying if he wanted to, one of them burst into tears at the table. We will have a good deal of trouble, I dare say, when the time comes, but we must stick to it.

After adopting a strong line against Gandhi, Linlithgow anticipated a spate of resignations by his Indian Councillors when Gandhi lay critically ill. He also suspected that the Hindu Councillors were under pressure from G.D. Birla, Purshottamdas Thakurdas and other industrialists to resign their positions.⁵⁹ But whatever the consequences, Linlithgow was determined not to flinch. He was willing to face any crisis : whether it was caused by Gandhi's death or by resignations of his Councillors. He told the recalcitrant Councillors that if they wanted to go, they should go at once. This was not a desperate outburst. For he also played on their other fears by telling them that their resignations would cause irreparable damage to the constitutional progress of India, and this might enable Jinnah to bring more Muslims into the Council.⁶⁰ In reality, though, Linlithgow had decided to bring men from the Services to fill up these positions.⁶¹ The Hindu members especially apprehended that if Gandhi died in confinement, people would label them as criminals and executioners.

Immediately after the debate in the Central Assembly and on the eighth day of Gandhi's fast, three Executive Councillors—Homi Mody, N.R. Sarkar and M.S. Aney—resigned. In a joint statement, they said : "Certain differences arose on what we regarded as a fundamental issue (the issue of the action to be taken on Mahatma Gandhi's fast) and we felt we could no longer retain our offices."⁶² For the first time, three

59. Linlithgow to Amery, 11 February 1943, *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 651.

"I would certainly not anticipate united support and might very well have a majority against me. Resignation of Hindus on such an issue would have most unfortunate effect and I doubt certain of them being willing to shelter behind fact that responsibility was mine. They will probably be most difficult to handle..." Linlithgow to Amery, 11 January 1943, *ibid.*, p. 484.

60. Linlithgow to Amery, 11 February 1943 and 12 February 1942, *ibid.*, pp. 654, 657.

61. Linlithgow to Amery, 16 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 676.

62. Gandhi, n. 50, p. 159.

Indian Councillors had come out openly to protest against the arbitrary policy of the Government. Their resignation and exit from the Council did not produce any perceptible change in the official policy.

After the failure of these moves, C. Rajagopalachari, K.M. Munshi and G L. Mehta initiated a meeting of eminent leaders in New Delhi on 19 February 1943. Presiding over the meeting, Tej Bahadur Sapru condemned the Government for ruling the country like a policeman. He made an impassioned appeal : "We make on this occasion an appeal to the civilized conscience of Great Britain and of the United Nations, and we do say that if it is intended that this country should settle down to constructive work, then it is absolutely necessary that Mahatma Gandhi should be released."⁶³ The meeting unanimously passed a resolution which demanded that in the interest of the future of India and of international goodwill Mahatma Gandhi should be released immediately and unconditionally. It viewed with the gravest concern the catastrophe that would arise if the Government failed to take timely action.⁶⁴

Replying to the communication of the Non-Party Leaders' Conference, containing this resolution, the Viceroy's private Secretary, J.G. Laithwaite, wrote on 20 February 1943 : "No new factor has emerged...responsibility in connection with his fast rests solely with Mr. Gandhi with whom, and not with Government, the decision to bring it to an end must rest."⁶⁵ After this rebuff, the non-party leaders sent cables to Winston Churchill, Arthur Greenwood, leader of the opposition in the House of Commons, and Percy Harris, leader of the Liberal party, on 21 February 1943, demanding Gandhi's immediate release. The cable, signed by twenty-nine eminent Indians headed by Tej Bahadur Sapru, referred to the Viceroy's uncompromising attitude, and affirmed that if the Mahatma's life was spared, promotion of peace and goodwill would be facilitated as surely as his death would intensify public embitterment. It further pointed out that charges brought by the Government against the Mahatma did not rest upon an

63. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

64. M R. Jayakar moved the resolution, *ibid*, p. 167; also Mansergh, n. 5, vol. 3, pp. 705-6.

65. Gandhi, n. 50, p. 182.

examination by any impartial tribunal or independent body of men.⁶⁶

To this Winston Churchill replied on 22 February 1943⁶⁷ : ... H.M.G. endorse the determination of the Government of India not to be deflected from their duty towards the peoples of India and of the United Nations by Mr. Gandhi's attempt to secure his unconditional release by fasting.

The first duty of the Government of India and of H.M.G. is to defend the soil of India from the invasion by which it is still menaced, and to enable India to play her part in the general cause of the United Nations. There can be no justification for discriminating between Mr. Gandhi and other Congress leaders. The responsibility therefore rests entirely with 'Mr. Gandhi himself.

Churchill was echoed by Amery in the House of Commons.⁶⁸

IV

A section of the press in Great Britain, unlike official British opinion, demanded Gandhi's immediate release. The *Manchester Guardian* wrote that in the event of Gandhi's death Indo-British relations would suffer a great setback ; for Gandhi was not like other leaders, he was India itself. Official policy might mean "victory for logic but not for statesmanship."⁶⁹ The *New Statesman And Nation* was certain that if the "saintly rebel" died, the cold, irreconcilable sense of alienation among Indians against the British would grow, and prove more disastrous than any hypothetical loss of prestige. Gandhi's arrest and detention were assuredly irrational and unreasonable.

66. Mansergh, n. 5, vol. 3, pp. 711-2.

67. Amery to Linlithgow. 23 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 720.

68. Amery told the House of Commons on 25 February 1943 :

"There can be no justification for the release of men who deliberately planned to paralyse India's defence at a most critical moment, and who have shown no sign of abandoning their criminal purpose, nor is there any reason in this respect for discrimination between Mr. Gandhi and other Congress leaders." Gandhi, n. 51, p. 191.

69. *Manchester Guardian*, 21 and 25 February 1943.

"It is not sentiment, but a sober, utilitarian calculation that calls for his liberation."⁷⁰

Many persons in India also looked towards the United States for sympathy at that moment of crisis. William Phillips, President Roosevelt's Personal Representative in India, came to hold the spot light for some time. His importance suddenly shot up because of a genuine belief among Indians of all classes that American intervention might induce the British to yield. All the nationalist leaders pleaded with the American diplomat to do something at least to save the life of the Mahatma.⁷¹ Common people, too, from far off places urged him to use his "good office". In an interview, C. Rajagopalachari cautioned William Phillips "that the United States should take a longer range view of world developments and realize the dangers of an anti-white complex becoming entrenched in the minds of Asian peoples." Gandhi's death, he stated, would bring in its wake "bitter anti-British and anti white sentiments."⁷²

The high expectations were, of course, not fulfilled. Without instructions from Washington Phillips was initially reluctant to do anything that might jeopardize his position with the Viceroy.⁷³ But he also felt that in order to keep untarnished the American image of a champion of liberalism and democracy, his Government should do something. Seeking guidelines, he asked the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, on 16 February 1943, whether the President would permit him to approach the Viceroy and express the American people's

70. *New Statesman And Nation* (London), 20 and 27 February 1943.

71. Joginder Singh, Homy Mody (Members of the Viceroy's Executive Council), K. Srinivasan (Editor, *The Hindu*), G.D. Birla (industrialist) and many other Indian leaders visited and urged upon William Phillips to intervene; M.S. Venkataramani and B.K. Shrivastava, "The President and the Mahatma, America's Response to Gandhi's Fast February-March 1943," *International Review of Social History* (Amsterdam), pt. 2, vol. 13, 1968, p. 151.

72. *Ibid.*, pp. 160-1.

73. Personal Representative of the President in India (William Phillips) to the Secretary of State (Cordell Hull), 12 February 1943, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1943* (Washington, 1964), vol. 4, pp. 191-2.

deep concern over the political crisis.⁷⁴ The Secretary of State did not approve of it ; instead he asked Phillips to go to Washington for further consultations at the end of April or the beginning of May.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, with Gandhi's health entering into the danger zone, public pressure on Phillips was mounting. He realized the deep agony of the masses and also the rising anti-British feeling among the elite.⁷⁶

When Phillips made some covert efforts to see Gandhi, Linlithgow clearly told him that in no circumstances would the Government agree to his seeing Gandhi under detention.⁷⁷ While Linlithgow kept Phillips informed of all developments relating to Gandhi's fast, he felt deeply annoyed when Phillips handed him a message from Cordell Hull emphasising the urgency of avoiding Gandhi's death in detention. The Viceroy found it improper on the part of the United States to interfere in the internal affairs of the British Government at that critical moment. He asked London to tell the State Department in Washington that "we are not prepared to agree to intervention in handling situation already exceedingly difficult and delicate and bound to be aggravated by the very slightest suggestion of interference, however well-intentioned."⁷⁸ He told Phillips that as a war Viceroy whatever he was doing was for the furtherance of the Allied cause. Gandhi's rehabilitation at the expense of the Government at this stage would have disastrous effects. If Gandhi emerged triumphant, the Government's position would become insecure. Linlithgow further affirmed that Gandhi's death would not be a serious loss to the country.

74. Personal Representative of the President in India (William Phillips) to the Secretary of State (Cordell Hull), 16 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 194.

75. Secretary of State (Cordell Hull) to Personal Representative of the President in India (William Phillips), 16 February 1943, *ibid.*

76. The day on which Gandhi's condition became very grave (21 February 1943), Phillips was invited to a dinner hosted by J.P. Srivastava, an Indian Executive Councillor. There Phillips found that about fifty guests and the Councillor's wife and two daughters were boycotting the function, "in view of their concern over the Mahatma's life and their intense feeling against the Government." Venkataramani and Srivastava, n. 71, p. 168.

77. Linlithgow to Amery, 9 February 1943, Mansergh, n. 5, vol. 3, pp. 640-1.

78. Linlithgow to Amery, 19 February 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 688-9.

Rather, "the prospect of a settlement would be greatly enhanced by the disappearance of Gandhi, who had for years torpedoed every attempt at a settlement."⁷⁹

In view of the Viceroy's stubborn attitude, Phillips informed Washington that only the King, by showing a magnanimous gesture, could save the situation by releasing Gandhi unconditionally.⁸⁰ It proved to be a futile diplomatic exercise. The U.S. Secretary of State could only tell the British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, (20 February 1943) that the President would not like to see Gandhi's death in prison. He, of course, assured the British Ambassador that Phillips would not say anything which might "accentuate the already high tension that exists and aggravate the difficulties now confronting the British." At the same time, to assuage Indian nationalist sentiments, the Secretary of State suggested to Phillips on the same day (20 February 1943): "I believe you might appropriately say that any phases of the Indian situation which require discussion will be dealt with by the ranking officials of the American and British Governments."⁸¹ This statement of Phillips later created a small bubble of hope in the ocean of despair. But soon it melted away. Seeing the intransigence and irreconcilable attitude of the British, Phillips told his President on 23 February 1943 that the Viceroy, adamant as he was, had refused to listen to any appeals. "Perhaps he is a 'Chip off the old block' that Americans knew something about in 1772."⁸²

79. *Ibid.*, p. 690.

80. Personal Representative of the President in India (William Phillips) to the Secretary of State (Cordell Hull), 19 February 1943, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1943*, n. 73, p. 198.

81. The Secretary of State (Cordell Hull) to the Personal Representative of the President in India, 20 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 199. "The President however was impressed by the undesirable consequences on public opinion in the United States and elsewhere if Gandhi died, and wondered whether less harm would not be done if Gandhi was released before he died.... They clearly feel that from point of view of agitation outside India, release of Gandhi when his situation becomes critical would avoid obvious dangers." Amery to Linithgow, 21 February 1943, Mansergh, n. 5, vol. 3, pp. 709-10.

82. Personal Representative of the President in India (William Phillips) to the President, 23 February 1943, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1943*, n. 73, p. 202.

In the event of Gandhi's death, Washington was considering to issue a statement simultaneously in India and the U.S.A. ; the State Department in Washington was busy giving final touches to it. The statement would not be something new ; it would be a repetition of an earlier statement (12 August 1942) which had emphasized that American troops were in India purely for the defence of the country against the Japanese, and that they were not to be involved in any internal developments.⁸³ It would keep off the Americans from the internal political entanglements, which might take a serious turn after Gandhi's death.

However, American public opinion and press were not keenly alive to the situation in India. Only the *Chicago Sun* showed some concern and asked for the immediate and unconditional release of Gandhi, lest the bad situation in India should become incalculably worse.⁸⁴ Newspapers like the *New York Herald Tribune*, *Christian Science Monitor* and *Chicago Daily News* vehemently denounced Gandhi for resorting to fasting. The *New York Herald Tribune* believed that to release Gandhi would "be a disastrous surrender and particularly dangerous under the peril of the war."⁸⁵ The *Chicago Daily News* characterized Gandhi's fast as a stunt.⁸⁶ There was thus "no significant domestic pressure on the Roosevelt Administration to exert itself in order to secure Gandhi's release."⁸⁷

While the British Dominions—Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa—apparently did not show much concern about the Indian political situation, they did show some interest in Gandhi's fast. Clement Attlee, the Deputy Prime Minister, kept informed all the Dominion Prime Ministers about political developments in India, and particularly about Gandhi's fast.⁸⁸ Two of them—Fraser of New Zealand and

83. Venkataramani and Shrivastava, n. 71, p. 167.

84. *Chicago Sun*, 23 February 1943.

85. *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 February 1943.

86. Venkataramani and Shrivastava, n. 71, p. 155.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

88. Attlee's letter to Mackenzie King of Canada, Curtin of Australia, Fraser of New Zealand and Field Marshal Smuts of South Africa, 10 February 1943, Mansergh, n. 5, vol. 3, p. 649. Attlee's letter to Mackenzie King of Canada, Curtin of Australia, Fraser of New Zea-

Field Marshal Smuts of South Africa—showed great anxiety about the possibility of Gandhi's death under detention. Fraser told Attlee : "I cannot help feeling that there is far more to be gained by Gandhi's release than there is by maintenance of a course which will bring about the most violent reaction and the deification of Gandhi by the whole of India as a martyr in what they hold is their struggle for freedom."⁸⁹ The War Cabinet had already decided to let Gandhi die rather than release him under a threat of fast. Replying to Fraser, Attlee said⁹⁰ :

... whether or not Gandhi if he died would be regarded as a martyr in the cause of India's freedom, the immediate dangers attending his unconditional release in existing circumstances are such that the Viceroy is not prepared to face them and we accept his judgment.

Field Marshal Smuts, who was once Gandhi's opponent, conveyed his uneasiness to Attlee. "Gandhi's death should be avoided by all means if possible, and it is worth considering whether forcible feeding by injections or otherwise should not be applied to him..."⁹¹ The suggestion of "forcible feeding," made in good faith by Smuts, was found impracticable by Attlee for in Gandhi's case that "would be most repugnant to Indian sentiment."⁹²

V

All efforts to secure Gandhi's release had thus failed. Either Gandhi would die or he would survive by his sheer inner strength. The whole atmosphere was surcharged with tension and anxiety.

The Government knew it well that Gandhi's fast would create many medical hazards. Roger Lumley, the Bombay Governor, at the very beginning had suggested that Dr. M.D.D. Gilder (who had treated Gandhi earlier) should be transferred

land and Field Marshal Smuts of South Africa, 22 February 1943, *ibid* , pp. 715-6.

89. Fraser to Attlees, 23 February 1943, *ibid* , p. 721.

90. Attlee to Fraser, 25 February 1943, *ib.d.*, p. 731.

91. Field Marshal Smuts to Attlee, 25 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 730.

92. Attlee to Field Marshal Smuts, 27 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 744.

from Yervada jail to Agra Khan's Palace to treat Gandhi during his fast.⁹³ But Linlithgow was against the idea of bringing anybody to nurse Gandhi when he was under detention. "Gandhi is taking certain risks in this business," he said, "and must face consequences"⁹⁴ In deference to the opinion of his Executive Council, Linlithgow later agreed reluctantly to provide full medical facilities to Gandhi.

Besides Dr. R.H. Candy, the Surgeon-General of Bombay, the Government of India permitted Dr. B.C. Roy, Dr. M.D.D. Gilder, Dr. Sushila Nayar and Dinshaw Mehta (a specialist on nature cure method) to attend on Gandhi. According to earlier arrangements, the Government allowed Devadas Gandhi to stay in the Aga Khan's Palace to attend on his father during his fast.

On the basis of medical advice, the Government of India calculated that Gandhi would collapse after five days of his fast. Accordingly, it warned the provincial Governments to keep in touch with the Army Commanders as regards military deployments, etc. The Bombay Government would send the code word RUBICON to the provincial Governments, if Gandhi were to die. Immediately after that all trunk telephone lines with Poona would be cut off for two hours. After his death, processions, public meetings and similar public demonstrations would be allowed for a few days, and after some time, restrictions would be reimposed.⁹⁵ After Gandhi's death, the press would be allowed to carry news about his death, his funeral, etc., along with some commemorative articles ; but no anti Government comments would be allowed.

Officially, the Government would announce the news in the following way : "The Government of India regret to announce that Mr. Gandhi died while in detention at Poona at.....hours on.....from collapse/heart failure following a self-imposed fast." The provincial Governments were also informed that there would be no closure of offices, no half-

93. Lumley (Bombay) to Linlithgow, 2 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 572.

94. Linlithgow to Lumley (Bombay), 3 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 578.

95. Linlithgow to all Provincial Governors, 17 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 682. Linlithgow to Lumley, 18 February 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 684-6. In case of Gandhi's death, London was to be informed by the code word, EXTRA. Linlithgow to Amery, 19 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 691.

masting or other official signs of mourning. No official message of condolence would be sent to his widow. Full discretionary powers were granted to the Governors to deal with the local situations. The Government of India at first was thinking of showing some official recognition by closure of offices for a day or half a day, as a measure to satisfy public sentiment. But this idea was later dropped. It was also arranged that after Gandhi's funeral, his ashes would be kept in Poona for some time and later secretly flown to a place selected by his relatives. By no means would these be sent by train, because there was the constant danger of mob frenzy throughout the route.⁹⁶

Other necessary arrangements would be made by the Bombay Government. The Bombay Governor had already made plans for deployment of troops in strategic places. He also sent one British official (Bristow) to Poona to make arrangements for Gandhi's funeral.⁹⁷ In case Gandhi survived, the Government would prohibit all interviews and return as soon as possible to the *status quo ante*.⁹⁸

The Government was thus prepared to meet all eventualities as a result of Gandhi's fast. The Governor of the Central Provinces, on instructions from New Delhi, decided that in the event of Gandhi's death, he would issue immediately a *Gazette Extraordinary* applying Defence of India Rule 56 throughout the province ; condolence meetings would be allowed to take place within buildings, not in public places. Disagreeing with the Government of India, the Governor believed that the attempt at pacification by permitting the masses "to give vent to their feelings would not be feasible. The left-wingers and the students might take advantage of the concession to create more chaos in the country. The Governor assured the Viceroy : "If disorders are attempted we shall hit back immediately with considerably greater force than in August last."⁹⁹

96. Linlithgow to all Provincial Governors, 17 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 682. Linlithgow to Lumley (Bombay), 18 February 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 682-6. Linlithgow to Amery, 19 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 692. Linlithgow to all Provincial Governors, 20 February 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 704-5.

97. Lumley to Linlithgow, 4 March 1943, *ibid.*, p. 760.

98. Linlithgow to Bajpai, Agent General Washington, 26 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 735.

99. Home Political File No. 4/3/43.

From the very beginning of the fast, Gandhi's physical condition caused considerable anxiety to the attending doctors. He passed a critical period from 18 February to 23 February 1943. On 21 February, the doctors declared : "...if the fast is not ended without delay, it may be too late to save his life."¹⁰⁰ But Gandhi baffled all, particularly medical men, and survived the ordeal. The fast was broken according to plan, on 3 March 1943, at 9.34 A.M.

This remarkable feat of Gandhi, however, stupefied the British press and the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. It was beyond Churchill's comprehension how the old man could survive a twenty-one day fast. From the very beginning he was intrigued by this thought and felt suspicious about the genuineness of the fast.¹⁰¹ On 13 February 1943, he told Linlithgow : "I have heard that Gandhi usually has glucose in his water when doing his various fasting antics."¹⁰² Linlithgow, however, informed him that though his medical attendants were trying to persuade Gandhi to take glucose, he had refused absolutely.¹⁰³ This reply could not satisfy Churchill at all. So again on 25 February 1943, he telegraphed to the Viceroy¹⁰⁴ :

Cannot help feeling very suspicious of *bonafides* of Gandhi's fast. We were told fourth day would be the crisis and then well staged climax was set for eleventh day onwards. Now at fifteenth day bulletin looks as if he might get through. Would be most valuable my (any ?) fraud could be exposed. Surely with all these Congress Hindu doctors round him it is quite easy to slip glucose or other nourishment into his food.

It seemed that whatever New Delhi might say, Churchill was determined to tell the world that it was a fraudulent fast. On 26 January 1943, he told Field Marshal Smuts that during the past week Gandhi had been eating better meals than him. "What fools we should have been," he said, "to flinch before

100. Gandhi, n. 51, p. 200.

101. *Ibid.*, pp. 201-2.

102. Churchill to Linlithgow, 13 February 1943, Mansergh, n. 5, vol. 3, p. 659.

103. Linlithgow to Churchill, 15 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 669. Linlithgow told Amery : "There is no suggestion that any glucose is being taken" (by Gandhi). 23 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 718.

104. Churchill to Linlithgow, 25 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 730.

all this bluff and sob-stuff.”¹⁰⁵ Linlithgow also now changed his tune and telegraphed to Churchill, on 26 February 1943, that he had long known Gandhi as “the world’s most successful humbug” and had not the least doubt that his physical condition and the bulletins reporting it from day to day had been so cooked as to produce the maximum effect upon public opinion. There would be no difficulty in his entourage administering glucose or any other food without the knowledge of the Government doctors. The degree of nervous tension and hysteria engendered by all “the Hindu hocus pocus is beyond belief.”¹⁰⁶

Churchill felt happy and encouraged by this report. He suggested to the Viceroy that the Government of India should make an effort to ridicule Gandhi’s fast. Congratulating the Viceroy, he said: “It now seems almost certain that the old rascal will emerge all the better from his so-called fast...How foolish those cowardly Ministers now look who ran away from a bluff and sob-stuff crisis. Your own strong cool sagacious handling of the matter has given me the greatest confidence and satisfaction.”¹⁰⁷

Linlithgow fully shared the glow of victory and told Amery: “We have exposed the Light of Asia—Wardha version—for the fraud it undoubtedly is: blue glass with a tallow candle behind it!”¹⁰⁸ In the same mood he wrote to Roger Lumley, who had been consistently opposing the Viceroy’s policy towards Gandhi, that they had blunted the weapon of the fast. Congress had suffered a significant defeat; the Muslims, the Scheduled castes and the services had been encouraged. The Government had gained a reputation for resolution and firmness of purpose.¹⁰⁹

Both Churchill and Linlithgow were greatly disappointed by Surgeon-General R.H. Candy’s verdict: “I am however, convinced that if anything was added to his diet, he [Gandhi] was ignorant of the fact. If anybody added anything, e.g. glucose, I think the culprit was Dr. Sushila Nayar.”¹¹⁰ The

105. Churchill to Field Marshal Smuts, 26 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 738.

106. Linlithgow to Churchill, 26 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 737.

107. Churchill to Linlithgow, 28 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 744.

108. Linlithgow to Amery, 2 March 1943, *ibid.*, p. 746.

109. Linlithgow to Lumley (Bombay), 11 March 1945, *ibid.*, p. 788.

110. Secret Note on Mr. Gandhi’s Fast, 10 February—3 March: 5 March

report had clearly established the fact that Gandhi was above all suspicions. Nevertheless, Churchill not only repeated the charge that Gandhi was taking glucose during his fast, but even made the preposterous assertion that Gandhi had "abandoned" his fast after being convinced of British "obduracy."¹¹¹

The Government's intention was further revealed when it issued a "white paper" on *Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances 1942-43*, on 13 February 1943, while Gandhi was fighting "every inch of the ground" to survive. The purpose of this statement was to tarnish Gandhi's image by implicating him with mob violence. Gandhi naturally felt suspicious about the timing of this publication, and later asked the Additional Home Secretary, Government of India : "The date is ominous. Why was the period of my fast chosen for publishing a document in which I am the target ?"¹¹² He added emphatically : "This train of reasoning has led me to the inference that it was

1943, Report by R.H. Candy, Surgeon-General, Bombay, *ibid.*, p. 771.

111. Churchill in his war memoirs writes : "I was certain however at an early stage that he was being fed with glucose whenever he drank water, and this, as well as his intense vitality and life-long austerity enabled this frail being to maintain his prolonged abstention from any visible form of food . . . In the end, being quite convinced of our obduracy, he abandoned his fast, and his health, though he was very weak, was not seriously affected." Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War, Vol. 4. The Hinge of Fate* (London, 1951), pp. 660-1.
112. M.K. Gandhi to R. Tottenham (Additional Home Secretary, Government of India), 15 July 1943, *Gandhiji's Correspondence*, n. 2, p. 118. In fact, for some time past the Government of India was seriously considering the publication of a document putting all responsibility for the disturbances on the Congress in general and Gandhi in particular. After receiving Gandhi's letters Linlithgow felt urgent necessity and usefulness of such a document, where the burden of responsibility could be fixed on Congress "for the violent and revolutionary character of the rising last autumn." He felt that "...it would be of very great value if we could,...publicly fix that burden on them (Congress leaders) fairly and squarely, in such a way that they could not escape it." Linlithgow to Amery, 26 January 1943, Mansergh, n. 5, vol. 3, p. 547. Linlithgow was pressing his officials to expedite the work so that it could be published before Gandhi's fast (9 February 1943), Linlithgow to Amery, 4 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 582.

published in expectation of my death which medical opinion must have considered almost a certainty".¹¹³ The Additional Secretary curtly replied to Gandhi : "I am to remind you that the document in question was published for the information of the public and not for the purpose of convincing you or eliciting your defence."¹¹⁴ On top of it, Gandhi's request for the publication of his letter was turned down on the ground that the Government would not act as agents for his propaganda.¹¹⁵ In desperation Gandhi observed : "In the present case the prosecutor happens to be also the policeman and jailor. He first arrests and gags his victims, and then opens his case behind their backs."¹¹⁶

VI

The injustice of the Government, did not go unnoticed and unchallenged. The non-party leaders headed by Tej Bahadur Sapru, meeting in New Delhi on 24 May 1943, demanded an impartial investigation into the causes of the prolonged detention of the Congress leaders. Further, they said that in case the Government was not going to set up an impartial tribunal, then for the sake of justice Gandhi and other Congress leaders must be set at liberty.¹¹⁷ The Government had never taken the Non-Party Leaders Conference seriously. Linlithgow's opinion about them was¹¹⁸ :

None of them count for a row of pins. They stand for nothing in the country. I doubt very much many of them

113. *Gandhiji's Correspondence*, n. 2, pp. 117-264 ; also *Correspondence with Mr. Gandhi*, n. 2, pp. 34-112.

114. R. Tottenham to M.K. Gandhi, 14 October 1943, *ibid.*, p. 266

115. *Ibid.*, p. 269.

116. M.K. Gandhi to R. Tottenham, 15 July 1943, *ibid.*, p. 119.

117. Gandhi, n. 51, pp. 242-4. The statement was signed by Tej Bahadur Sapru, M.R. Jayakar, Sachchidananda Sinha, Chunilal B. Mehta, Raja Maheswar Dayal Seth and Kunwar Jagdish Prasad. *Ibid.* Their earlier attempt (Bombay meeting, 10 March 1943), to seek an interview with Gandhi did not succeed. The Viceroy rejected their plea on the ground that their organization was not a representative one ; it had not condemned violence unequivocally ; and Gandhi had not repudiated the Quit India resolution. *Ibid.*, pp. 232-5.

118. Linlithgow to Lumley (Bombay), 11 March 1943, Mansergh. n. 5, vol. 3, p. 789.

being able to win an election. They have done nothing to help us, and I am not a bit concerned about their feelings in the present circumstances...they are wholly unrepresentative...

The Government of India sent a communication to Gandhi on 14 October 1943, reiterating that his case could be reviewed if he agreed to fulfill certain preconditions, like disassociating himself from the Congress resolution of 8 August 1942, unequivocally condemning the violent outrages that had occurred after the passing of that resolution, declaring himself clearly in favour of the use of Indian resources for the prosecution of the war against the Axis powers and in particular Japan, until victory was won, and finally, giving satisfactory assurances for good conduct in future.¹¹⁹

The Government of India, of course, knew it well that no self-respecting person, not to speak of Gandhi, would accept these conditions. The fact was that it was not prepared to allow the Congress to function in the open so long as the war continued. As Reginald Maxwell observed¹²⁰ :

A party with such a record obviously can no longer claim to take any share in the administration of the country in war, nor, without complete and unconditional capitulation and the fullest guarantees of future conduct, can it safely be allowed freedom of action until the war is won.

On 4 May 1943, Gandhi made an attempt to communicate with Jinnah with a view to finding "a common solution" to "the great question of communal unity." This letter was written in response to Jinnah's public invitation to him.¹²¹ Upon a reference from the Government of India, the War Cabinet decided against the delivery of this letter to Jinnah.¹²²

119. R. Tottenham's (Additional Secretary, Home Department, Government of India) letter to M.K. Gandhi, 14 October 1943, *Gandhiji's Correspondence*, n. 2, p. 270. Also *Correspondence with Mr. Gandhi*, n. 2, pp 112-4.

120. Note by Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member, Government of India Linlithgow to Amery, 15 March 1943, Mansergh, n. 5, vol. 3, p. 803.

121. M.K. Gandhi to M.A. Jinnah, 4 May 1943, *Gandhiji's Correspondence*, n. 2, pp. 89-90.

122. Minutes of the War Cabinet, 18 May 1943, Mansergh, n. 5, vol. 3, p. 994.

Amery told Linlithgow that "he [Gandhi] is kept incommunicado because of his responsibility for rebellion and must remain so until he disassociates himself from that policy."¹²² Explaining its reason for refusal, the Government of India said that it could not give facilities for political correspondence to a person who was detained for promoting an illegal mass movement. It was further stated that if Gandhi dissociated himself from the movement, he would be allowed to take part in the public affairs of the country.¹²⁴ There was "extreme improbability" that there would be any change in the psychological make-up of the Congress leaders. As such the Government was set for a long period of *status quo*.

Linlithgow was succeeded by Lord Wavell on 20 October 1943. In his maiden speech in the Central Legislature on 17 February 1944, the new Viceroy called upon every Congressman to withdraw individually from the Quit India resolution by using his own conscience. In this context, he said¹²⁵ :

But I see no reason to release those responsible for the declaration of August 8th, 1942, until I am convinced that the policy of non-cooperation and even of obstruction has been withdrawn—not in sackcloth and ashes, that helps no one—but in recognition of a mistaken and unprofitable policy.

Needless to say, Gandhi was all the time prepared to face an open trial. Even as early as 15 July 1943, he pleaded for the setting up of an impartial tribunal and wrote that a big political organization and not a mere individual was involved in the charges. He held that it should be a vital part of the war effort to have the issue decided by a tribunal. But mutual discussion and effort were considered undesirable and futile by the Government.¹²⁶

122. Amery to Linlithgow, 9 May 1943, *ibid.*, p. 955. In another letter to Linlithgow, Amery said : "...that Gandhi & Co. are off the telephone until they come to terms with the Post Office and are prepared to behave like ordinary subscribers." Amery to Linlithgow, 25 May 1943, *ibid.*, p. 1013.

123. Government of India's Press Communique, *Gandhiji's Correspondence*, n, 2, p. 91.

124. India, *Council of State Debates*, vol. 1, 1944, Official report, session 1944, pp. 33-9.

125. M.K. Gandhi to Additional Home Secretary, Government of India,

As regards Lord Wavell's appeal to individual Congress members to eschew the August 8 resolution, Gandhi said that it was an impossible proposition. A resolution passed by joint deliberation could only be withdrawn by joint discussion. Individual conscience had nothing to do here unless it was approved jointly ; besides a prisoner had no freedom to exercise his conscience.¹²⁷ It was only logical that Gandhi should thereafter inform the Viceroy in categorical terms that "unless there is a change of heart, view and policy on the part of the Government, I am quite content to remain your prisoner."¹²⁸

This Gandhi did on 9 April 1944. In the meantime, on 22 February 1944, he lost his wife, Kasturba Gandhi, who had for some time been suffering from chronic bronchitis. She, too, like Mahadev Desai, was cremated within the jail compound in the presence of Gandhi, their two sons and other inmates of the detention camp. Gandhi's correspondence with the Government shows that Kasturba did not receive timely medical help although Gandhi had been asking for it since 12 March 1943.¹²⁹ Later, Gandhi himself suffered from malaria and was also infected by hookworms.

The Government of India finally decided to release Gandhi and others who were detained with him on 6 May 1944. Gandhi was released unconditionally on medical grounds. The Home Department of the Government of India advised the provincial Governments on 5 May 1944 that the prees might be permitted some "blowing off of steam" for a day or two ; but it should not be allowed to play up the situation by using Gandhi's condition for political ends. Nor should any "intemperate or malicious" criticism of the Government's treatment of

15 July 1943, *Gandhiji's Correspondence*, n. 2, p. 272 ; also *Correspondence with Mr. Gandhi*, n. 2, p. 112.

127. M.K. Gandhi to Lord Wavell, 9 March 1944, *Gandhiji's Correspondence*, n. 2, p. 321.

128. M K. Gandhi to Lord Wavell, 9 April 1944, *ibid.*, pp. 329-30. Also *Correspondence with Mr. Gandhi*, n. 2, pp. 124-5.

129. *Gandhiji's Correspondence*, n. 2, pp. 275-304. Gandhi's Private Secretary, Pyarelal mentions : "Facilities for seeing her near relatives and getting nursing and medical aid were obtained after protracted correspondence, and in almost every case the relief, when it came, came too late." *Ibid.*, Introduction by Pyarelal, p. xxviii.

Gandhi be allowed. Should that, however, happen, pre-censorship would be re-imposed.¹³⁰

The Government could not have been more pleasantly surprised than it was by public reaction to Gandhi's release. It was hailed as an act of humanity and political wisdom. But it also generated the hope that the Government would regard Gandhi's release as a *deus ex-machina*, and resolve the deadlock which had for so long been like a running sore.¹³¹ Though the Government could not have relished this, the release gave rise to a wave of wishful optimism among large sections of Indians. For the Government was unwilling to flinch from its policy of maintaining the *status quo* for some time more. The day of settlement between the Congress and the Raj was still far off.

VII

Gandhi, who had been away from the political scene for about twenty-one months, found the situation full of uncertainty. He felt out of gear. The recent loss of his wife and of Mahadev Desai, his right-hand man, had considerably shaken him. The fast and then malaria had wrecked him. Physically unfit and mentally tired Gandhi decided to retire for long rest near the Juhu beach in Bombay.

But seclusion from politics was difficult. People would not allow him to be aloof and indifferent. The whole nation, so it seemed, was eager to know Gandhi's loud thinking ; and he felt obliged to make an agonizing reappraisal of the whole situation. He saw that his familiar world of 1942 had almost disappeared. A sense of political demoralization and depression prevailed the whole nation. Inter-party bickering and antagonisms had helped the Government play its game of majority *versus* minority in a very clever way. Only one party, the Muslim League, had acquired some amount of power and prestige during this period. Otherwise, the country was politically at its lowest ebb. Gandhi could also see that the Allied powers were now in a much better position and the Axis

130. Home Political File No. 33/19/44.

131. Home Political File No. 18/5/44, Fortnightly report, Bombay, May 1944.

powers were everywhere retreating. Japan no longer posed a threat to India's security. It was so much more difficult now to pressurize Great Britain. After the conclusion of the war, a victorious Great Britain would pay so much less attention to the Congress demands. Gandhi felt that if he did not move right then, it would be too late afterwards. The underground leaders-some of whom also met him-were, of course, determined to go on fighting. But that could have offered poor solace to Gandhi. The immediate task was to obtain the legalization of the Congress and the release of the Congress leaders. A new exercise had to be attempted : to adopt a conciliatory approach towards the Government without giving up the Quit India resolution.

Immediately after his release, Gandhi made his first move by seeking an interview with the Viceroy to personally impress upon him the urgency of the matter ¹³² But the Viceroy refused permission on the ground that Gandhi was yet to disassociate himself from the Quit India resolution. No meeting, he believed, could be successful because of the "existing radical difference in their points of view." He asked Gandhi to produce "a more definite and constructive programme."¹³³

Gandhi utilized the opportunity presented by an interview, on 4 July 1944, with Stuart Gelder of the *News Chronicle* of London to elaborate such a programme. Disavowing any intention to launch a civil disobedience movement that would embarrass the Government at that time, Gandhi suggested the immediate formation of a National Government with full control of civil administration. This would consist of persons chosen by the elected members of the Central Assembly. He conceded the defence and military powers to the Viceroy and his Commander-in-Chief. Of course, a defence member of the National Government would be there to assist the Viceroy and his Commander-in-Chief. The Allied powers would be allowed to carry out their operations in India. The Viceroy's position in such a Government would be like that of the King of England ; he would be guided by responsible ministers. Popular

132. M.K. Gandhi to Lord Wavell, 17 June 1944, Pyarelal (Comp.), *Gandhi's Correspondence with the Government, 1944-47* (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1959), p. 3.

133. Lord Wavell to M.K. Gandhi, 22 June 1944, *ibid.*, p. 4.

Government would also be restored in all the provinces. But before any other step was taken, Gandhi wanted the Government to make a forthright declaration of its intention to transfer power to Indian hands immediately after the war.

At the same time, Gandhi expressed his inability to commit the Congress to any course of action without consulting the CWC. The only assurance he could give was that he would advise the Congress to participate in the war-time National Government. As regards his own position in such an eventuality, he said that he would be only an adviser to the Congress. He would also attempt to keep India peace-minded and influence her world policy in the direction of international peace and brotherhood.¹³⁴

On 27 July 1944, Gandhi reassured the Viceroy that if the Government agreed to make an immediate declaration about Indian independence and showed its readiness to install a National Government, he would advise the CWC "to declare that in view of changed conditions mass civil disobedience envisaged by the resolution of August 1942 cannot be offered and that full cooperation in the war effort should be given."¹³⁵ He followed it up with an appeal to Winston Churchill, "to trust and use me for the sake of your people and through them those of the world."¹³⁶ Attaching "very great importance" to his letter to Winston Churchill because of the "psychological moment", Gandhi attributed a "sacred character" to it.¹³⁷ Characteristically enough, Churchill simply acknowledged the receipt of the letter and did not care to reply to it.¹³⁸ Only a section of the Liberal party took some interest in Gandhi's proposals and pressed for a debate on India. But the Parliament seemed too engrossed with the war to be meaningfully aware of the Indian question.¹³⁹

134. Home Political File No. 4/7/44. Also *Gandhi's Correspondence*, n. 132, pp. 288-5.

135. M.K. Gandhi to Lord Wavell, 27 July 1944, *ibid.*, p. 6.

136. M.K. Gandhi to Winston Churchill, 17 July 1944, *ibid.*, p. 11.

137. M.K. Gandhi to E.M. Jenkins, 17 September 1944, *ibid.*, p. 13.

138. Lord Wavell to M.K. Gandhi, 2 November 1944, *ibid.*, p. 15.

139. When the Indian question was discussed in the House of Commons, the number of audience did not exceed forty, and was reduced to twenty-five when Amery spoke. Home Political File No. 4/6/44.

The Government kept the door firmly bolted from inside. Gandhi's successive attempts to open it were of no avail. He received nothing but rebuffs. The Viceroy plainly told him, on 15 August 1944, that his proposals could not provide a basis for discussion because the Government was committed "to safeguard the interests of the racial and religious minorities and of the depressed classes, and their treaty obligations to the Indian states." The Viceroy added that a National Government could only be formed if there was a prior agreement between the Hindus and the Muslims and other important elements about the method by which the new constitution would be framed. The Government was at that time not prepared to share military and defence responsibilities with any other authority.¹⁴⁰

Gandhi naturally felt dismayed and depressed. In a letter to Agatha Harrison, he expressed his profound sorrow: "Everything I do turns to dust. It must be so, so long as I am 'untrust-worthy'." He refused to despair, and wrote later: "If I represent the truth and if I do as God bids me, I know that the wall of distortion and suspicion will topple."¹⁴¹

In order to meet Wavell's point about the need for a settlement between the Congress and the Muslim League, Gandhi accepted the Rajagopalachari formula which provided that if the Muslim League endorsed the demand for independence and cooperated with the Congress in forming a provisional interim Government during the war, the Congress would agree to a future plan according to which the Muslim majority districts could be demarcated through a plebiscite. According to reports reaching the Government, the Muslims in general felt happy at Gandhi's acceptance of the Rajagopalachari formula. They thought that it amounted to Gandhi's acceptance of Pakistan in principle. On the other hand, the National Liberal Federation and the Hindu Mahasabha were critical of the formula. Although there was a feeling that Gandhi had no real intention of conceding the demand for Pakistan, some pro-Congress elements felt that he had let down the Congress and the Hindu community. But many people still believed that nothing would happen as Jinnah was not likely to

140. Lord Wavell to M.K. Gandhi, 15 August 1944, *Gandhiji's Correspondence*, n. 132, pp. 7-9.

141. M.K. Gandhi to Agatha Harrison, 13 July 1944, *ibid.*, pp. 33-4.

cooperate with the formation of a National Government.¹⁴² This was confirmed when negotiations between Gandhi and Jinnah, held at the former's initiative, failed to produce any agreement.¹⁴³

Gandhi was now undoubtedly following a course which represented a departure from the Quit India resolution. This showed his pragmatism and sense of tactics. Many of his followers, however, failed to show equal appreciation of the realities of the changed situation. The hard-core stubborn Congress non-cooperators and the younger elements particularly raised a storm of protest against Gandhi's conciliatory moves. His attempts at *rapprochement* with the Government and with the Muslim League and his call to underground workers to surrender became controversial topics. The younger elements in the Congress felt that the underground activists were only following Gandhi's exhortation to "Do or Die." They felt surprised that while Gandhi had not committed the Congress on the question of the National Government, he had accepted the Rajagopalachari formula without consulting the CWC, and also opened negotiations with Jinnah. According to Intelligence reports from Bombay, the younger elements angrily pointed to the fact that this 'surrender' had earned nothing but further humiliation for the Congress. Though very restive and privately bitterly critical, they were far too disciplined to attack Gandhi publicly. The older group of Congressmen, though feeling that Gandhi had recently committed several tactical blunders, considered that it was their sacred duty to support him.¹⁴⁴

Whatever that may have been, after meeting set-backs and rebuffs from various quarters, Gandhi turned his attention

142. Governor-General to Secretary of State for India, 22 August 1944, Home Political File No. 51/6/44.

143. Gandhi-Jinnah correspondence started on 17 July 1944; their talks commenced on 9 September 1944 and continued till 27 September, but the two failed to reach an agreement. The correspondence was released to the press on 29 September 1944. An idea of the main points of the differences between them can be had from the correspondence exchanged between them on this occasion. See N.N. Misra (Ed.), *The Indian Annual Register*, Vol. 2, 1944 (Calcutta, n.d.), pp. 135-52.

144. Home Political File No. 18/8/44, Fortnightly report, Bombay, August 1944.

towards the constructive programme of the Congress as he had done in the past under similar circumstances. There was apparently nothing else for him to do than just wait till the British Government had realized that the continuation of the political deadlock in India was not in its interest.

That realization came only in June 1945, after the surrender of Germany and the end of the war in Europe. The gates of the Ahmednagar Fort were now opened and the Congress leaders along with their Muslim League counterparts and others hurried to a conference with the Viceroy at Simla. That marked the first round of a process which was to end two years later in partition and independence. The role of the Quit India movement in bringing about this process will be better understood if we examine the impact of that movement in India and abroad.

6

IMPACT IN INDIA AND ABROAD

AFTER suppressing the mass upsurge of August-September 1942, the British lapsed into euphoria for some time, assuming that they had effectively removed the Congress from the centre of Indian politics. In a state of disarray and disorganization, the Congress was thought to have been rendered incapable of posing any threat to the Government.¹ As early as 10 September 1942, Prime Minister Churchill declared in the British Parliament²:

The Indian Congress party does not represent all India. It does not represent the majority of the people of India. It does not even represent the Hindu masses. It is a political organization built around a party machine and sustained by certain manufacturing and financial interests.

Ninety million Muslims, fifty million depressed classes or untouchables, and ninety-five million Indians of Princely India, Churchill contended, were fundamentally opposed to the Congress. He included the Christians and the Sikhs, too, in this category of anti-Congress elements. The Congress as such was a non-representative and powerless organization which could do no harm. That the situation in India was normal was proved by the fact that 140,000 new recruits had joined the army during the time of the disturbances. He assured the

1. Governor-General to Secretary of State for India, 1 September 1942, Home Political File No. 97/42, National Archives, New Delhi.
2. U.K. Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, series 5, vol. 383, session 1942, cols. 302-5.

House of Commons that there was no occasion for undue despondency or alarm. If anything untoward happened in India, proper action would be taken, for "the number of white soldiers now in that country are larger than at any time in the British connection."³ He even asked his countrymen to ignore the Congress totally. Subsequently he wrote in his memoirs⁴ :

The measures proposed by the Viceroy and confirmed by the War Cabinet were soon effective. They proved the superficial character of the Congress Party's influence upon the masses of the Indian people, among whom there was deep fear of being invaded by Japan and who looked to the King-Emperor to protect them. During the whole of this direct trial of strength with the Congress leaders, many thousands of fresh volunteers came forward to join the Indian Army. What was at one time feared to become the most serious rebellion in India since the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, fizzled out in a few months with hardly any loss of life.

How mistaken this attitude was, becomes clear from the impressions of a B.B.C. official who was in India during the period of the mass upsurge. In a note submitted to Stafford Cripps, who wanted it to be circulated among the members of the War Cabinet, the official observed⁵ :

When I arrived in India, I learned from Indians that British prestige had never been lower and that bitterness against the British had never been so intense. When I left four months later nothing had occurred to restore our prestige as men of soldiers, and as we had just shot more Indians than we have ever done at one time since the Mutiny, the bitterness against us had intensified...

That Congress now has the sympathy of the people, there can be no doubt. The publication of the Allahabad papers in an attempt to discredit Congress was regarded as contemptible and did a great deal to help Congress.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War, Vol. 4, The Hinge of Fate* (London, 1951), pp. 456-7.

5. Enclosure to Amery's letter to Linlithgow, 3 November 1942, Nicholas Mansergh, ed., *The Transfer of Power, Vol. 3, 21 September—12 June 1943* (London, 1971), pp. 196-200.

The arrest of the leaders had the usual effect of enshrining them once again as national heroes, and the shooting did the rest. India, outside the Punjab and the States, is united against us at the very moment when 'we most require its co-operation in the running of a campaign in Burma.

Indeed if he had cared to keep himself informed of the feelings of the Indian people, Churchill might easily have had an idea of the nature of support enjoyed by the Congress in India. Even a British owned paper, *Civil and Military Gazette* commented : "It is merely fatuous casuistry to seek to lower the prestige of the Congress by subtracting from India's myriads the millions who do not owe allegiance to this organization and displaying the remaining few as possible Congress adherents."⁶

Churchill's fulminations against the Congress stirred up nationalist sentiments all over India. The non-party leaders, and the Hindu Mahasabha leaders in particular, expressed profound indignation over his statement and questioned the authenticity of the facts quoted by him. According to the non-party leaders his statement showed the bankruptcy of the British policy. They believed that Whitehall was devoid of all statesmanship and had no capacity to foresee the results of its faulty policy. In a joint statement issued on 16 September 1942, Tej Bahadur Sapru and M.R. Jayakar observed : "This is not the first time in Indian history that the political estimate of the Government of India and their advisers has proved to be wrong."⁷

Another Liberal leader, Chimanlal Setalvad, found Churchill's statement "most unfortunate", and said : "It misses the realities of the Indian situation. The attempt to belittle the position and influence of the Congress and to make out that it represents a minority of the Indian people will raise a smile." He reminded the Prime Minister "that in certain circumstances silence is golden."⁸

6. Devadas Gandhi (Comp.), *India Unreconciled* (New Delhi, 1943), p 49.

7. Joint statement by Tej Bahadur Sapru and M.R. Jayakar issued at Indore, 16 September 1942, *ibid.*, pp. 45-7.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

The Hindu Mahasabha leaders said that Churchill's statement betrayed "lamentable lack of statesmanship" and added⁹ : The internal situation in India today is more serious than what is depicted to be. The reign of repression has accentuated bitterness and has deepened anti-British feelings. Let Mr. Churchill along with some representatives of America, Russia and China visit India and see things for himself.

Before long, Allah Buksh, the leader of the nationalist Muslims and the Premier of Sind, challenged the Prime Minister's claim that ninety million Muslims were not participating in the freedom struggle. He warned the Government that this type of impolitic obstinacy could only result in a catastrophe. Not satisfied with this verbal condemnation, he returned his O.B.E. The Viceroy considered it an insult, and ordered the Sind Governor to dismiss the defiant Premier. Thus Allah Buksh lost his office in spite of commanding a majority in the Assembly.¹⁰

At the Centre also the picture was not as bright as it seemed to be. Among the Indian Councillors, C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer was the first to react to the situation. He sought permission from the Viceroy to fly to Poona to see Gandhi, whom he would beg to call off the civil disobedience movement.

Linlithgow felt disturbed by this development, because Aiyer offered to resign if his request was rejected. Linlithgow believed that by approaching Gandhi, Aiyer would encourage the Congress and damage the position of the Government. But the resultant exit of Aiyer from the Council, too, would tarnish the image of the Government. "His Majesty's Government would have misleading and unhappy impressions in Great Britain, China and the United States."¹¹

The Viceroy tried his best to dissuade Aiyer from taking this step. Finally, the Viceroy and Aiyer reached a compromise,

9. The statement was issued jointly by Syama Prasad Mookerjee, B.S. Moonje, Raja Maheswar Dayal, N.C. Chatterjee and Mehar Chand Khanna—all members of the Hindu Mahasabha Special Committee. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-8.

10. Allah Buksh's letter to the Viceroy, 26 September 1942, *ibid.*, pp. 74-6.

11. Linlithgow to Amery, Mansergh, n. 5, vol. 2, 16 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 722.

and the latter left the Council on a different pretext, *i.e.*, to safeguard the interests of the Indian States from Congress-League politicians. Aiyer had also some differences with the Viceroy on the question of imposition of press restrictions. He had failed to check the Government's favouritism towards the Anglo-Indian press. Being the Information Member, he found it embarrassing, under the circumstances, to stay on in the Government. Aiyer was also worried about the prospects of Gandhi's fast.¹²

Besides Aiyer, some other Indian members of the Executive Council too felt terribly unhappy at the turn of events. Only one member, M.S. Aney, openly said in the beginning of the mass upsurge that he was quite happy with the Government's policy¹³ ; but later he joined Homi Mody and N.R. Sarkar in submitting resignation as a protest against Government's policy towards Gandhi's fast.

Besides these high-ups in the Government, the movement also made a deep impression on the Indian members of the various services, including the police. And yet Reginald Maxwell publicly boasted that the Services had solidly stood by the Government ; not only the police, "on whom the deadliest attacks usually tell," but all ranks of Government servants "stood firm and did their duty in face of all attempts to subvert or terrorise them."¹⁴

The real situation was different. As official sources themselves reported, the subordinate Indian officials used to worship Gandhi like a demigod. They also regarded his sayings as prophecies. The widely circulated rumour associated with Gandhi, that within two months India would be independent, had greatly excited them, and they were expecting that soon the Government and the Congress would come to a settlement.¹⁵

12. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer's first letter to the Viceroy, 14-15 August 1942, *ibid.*, pp. 725-6.

13. India, *Legislative Assembly Debates*, vol. 1-2, official report, session 1943, cols. 307-8.

14. Reginald Maxwell's speech in the National Defence Council meeting on 8 September 1942, Home Political File No. 3/26/42.

15. Home Political File Nos. 18/8/42, 18/9/42, Fortnightly reports, Bihar, U.P., Bombay, August, September 1942.

Very few Indians resigned their posts. But that did not mean that they gave staunch support to the Government either ; possibly economic necessity compelled them to stick to their jobs. As a psychologically satisfying though quiet, act of defiance, some of these officials lent their typewriters, official envelopes, service stamps and similar other articles for the purpose of despatching "Quit India" notices to the British officials, and minatory letters ("Do or Die") to Indian officials. Some of these originated from New Delhi (Karol Bagh) itself. The Government even suspected that some railway employees were involved in sabotage activities. It had indeed detected in New Delhi two cases of internal sabotage—one in the Record Room of the South Block of the Secretariat, and the other in the Supply Accounts office in the Assembly Chamber.¹⁶

Village teachers, doctors serving in the rural dispensaries, station masters of the railways, and officials in the postal department did not extend full co-operation to the Government in suppressing the disturbances. Particularly, in Bihar, Midnapore (Bengal), Satara (Bombay) and Eastern U.P., the constabulary, the magistracy and the revenue officials were very much affected. In Bombay, many police patels resigned.¹⁷ In the Ballia district, U.P., it was reported that the police had completely defected.¹⁸

The Bihar Government was constrained to observe¹⁹ :

In a sudden or extensive popular upheaval like this one... We have no Government servants in the *mufassil* other than the regular police and our sources of information dry up and local support undergoes severe diminution. We could have expected some support from the employees of local bodies, but they have in recent years been almost all under Congress control.

The Bihar police struck work on two occasions. About one hundred and forty recruits deserted from Nathnagar police training centre. At Jamshedpur, one head constable led a strike of one hundred and twenty policemen on 10 August

16. Home Political File No. 3/34/42.

17. Home Political File Nos. 18/8/42, 18/10/42, Fortnightly reports, Bombay, August and October 1942.

18. Home Political File No. 3/16/42.

19. Home Political File No. 3/34/42.

1942.²⁰ Most of them, however, rejoined duty by 6 September 1942. The Government prosecuted thirty-three of them. During the trial, these policemen consistently shouted Congress and anti-British slogans. Seventeen of the accused refused to be tried under the existing law, and the evidence had to be recorded in their absence.²¹ The Karachi police also went on strike on 10 August 1942.²² In many places, co-operation and co-ordination were lacking between the police and other branches of the administration. Regarding the morale of the police, the Superintendent of Police, Chapra (Bihar) reported on 15 August 1942 : "We have been watching the attitude of the constabulary for the last two days and regard their attitude with grave apprehension. Wherein we have attempted to clear crowds by *la'hi* charge, they have done the minimum that is possible, and it is only the officers who have done all that is possible."²³

The forcible elimination of the Congress from the political field did not help the Government. Its disappearance, in fact, created a big political void in the country. The Government's policy of continuing the *status quo* created a good deal of tension and uncertainty about the political future of the country. Consequently there was now greater frustration in the air than ever before. This in turn awakened a sense of urgency and immediacy in the minds of even non-Congress leaders. Many of them stressed the desirability of the formation of a National Government, represented by the Congress, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha. There was also a widespread demand that the Congress leaders should be released forthwith to enable them to participate in such a Government. The demand for Gandhi's release became almost universal, particularly during his fast.

The Congress case was also ably put forth on the floors of the Central Legislative Assembly by a group of Independents,

20. K.K. Datta, *History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar, Vol. 3, 1942-47* (Patna, 1958), p. 220.

21. Home Political File Nos. 3/34/42, also 18/10/42, Fortnightly report, Bihar, October 1942. Out of thirty-three accused policemen, nineteen received from nine months to one year's rigorous imprisonment, and the rest six to eleven months' rigorous imprisonment.

22. Home Political File No. 3/34/42.

23. Datta, n. 20, p. 60.

Liberals and members of other political parties. The Muslim League, the Europeans and the official nominees, of course, formed a solid phalau against the Congress. In these debates, demands were made for Gandhi's release, transfer of power to a National Government, and for instituting an Inquiry Committee to investigate the alleged cases of police and military excesses. However, all these demands were turned down by the Government.

The prestige of the Congress among the masses was not adversely affected. Rather, the news of the sufferings of the Congress leaders and workers at the hands of the Government raised Congress prestige to a new height. Holding no brief for the Congress, Chimanlal Setalvad contradicted the assertion that the continued incarceration of its leaders and the fact of its being out of power had weakened the Congress hold on the country to an extent that the party for the moment was practically dead. Such an assertion was "a gross misconception and mis-reading of human psychology." Setalvad had no doubt in his mind that if general elections to the legislatures were held the Congress would sweep the polls.²⁴

These were prophetic words. While the Congress leaders were in jail, some local board and municipal board elections were held. In all these elections, the Congress proved its popularity beyond doubt. These bodies refused to function after the elections as a mark of protest against the Government's unyielding attitude towards the Congress.

In many places, legal and relief committees were formed to offer legal and financial help to the political sufferers and their families. Several non-Congress parties like the Hindu Mahasabha, along with some philanthropic organizations, like the Servants of India Society, collected substantial funds for this cause. Many eminent lawyers like Tej Bahadur Sapru

24. Home Political File No. 18/4/44, Fortnightly report, Bombay, April 1944.

25. The Surat Congress Municipal Committee decided not to function as a protest against the British policy. In its long resolution, it observed: "This Board feels that no local self-Government institution can discharge its normal functions in the true interests of the people with independence and self-respect, and that this Board, inclusive of its President and Vice-President, shall cease to function forthwith and that this meeting do stand adjourned *sine die*." *Ibid*.

and K.N. Katju offered their services free to many Congress workers.²⁶

II

The impact of the Quit India movement was not confined to India. It was felt in several foreign lands. Ever since his visit to India, Chiang Kai-shek was keeping a close watch over Indian political developments, as the Chinese security problems were vitally linked with India's defence capabilities. Chiang Kai-shek had full sympathies for the Congress and its leaders. On 30 July 1942, he sent a long message to President Roosevelt urging him to intervene in Indian affairs. As he put it²⁷ :

With both sides remaining adamant in their views, the Indian situation has reached an extremely tense and critical stage. Its development in fact constitutes the most important factor in determining the outcome of the United Nations war and especially the war in the East... Such an eventuality will seriously affect the whole course of the war and at the same time the world might entertain doubts as to the sincerity of the lofty war aims of the United Nations. This will not only prove a great disadvantage to Britain but will also reflect discredit to the democratic front.

He further emphasized that it was the duty of the United Nations to prevent the occurrence of "such an unfortunate state of affairs." He felt that, being the leader in that "war of right against might," the United States should take a stand on the side of justice and equality, especially as there was still time to reach an accord with the Indian nationalists. Chiang Kai-shek emphasized that attempts at repression with a view to compelling the Indian people to capitulate would have the opposite result. He implored, therefore, that "for the sake of our common victory the United Nations must seek to stabilise the Indian situation and to secure the Indian people's partici-

26. In Bengal Rs. 59,000 were collected for this purpose. Home Political File No. 4/1/44.

27. President (Roosevelt) to Prime Minister (Churchill), 30 July 1942, Mansergh. n. 5, vol. 2, pp. 529-32.

pation in the joint war effort." Though the despatch was "strictly confidential" and meant for the President's "personal reference," Roosevelt sent a transcript of this message to Churchill without giving his personal comment.²⁸

Churchill, who had the concept of the Congress as a body of lawyers, moneylenders and the Hindu priesthood, told the President, on 31 July 1942, that the intelligentsia of non-fighting Hindu elements could neither defend India nor raise a revolt. He further asserted: "The reckless declarations of Congress have moreover given rise to widespread misgiving, even among its own rank and file." Besides, he believed, the military prospects of the country would be seriously impaired if the Congress gained power. He finally hoped the President would dissuade Chiang Kai-shek "from his completely misinformed activities," and lend no countenance to putting pressure upon the British Government.²⁹

The President, however, felt, at any rate at that stage, that he could not go as far as restraining Chiang Kai-shek from interfering in Indian affairs, though he conceded that "the British Government must deal with the situation themselves." In an interview with R. Campbell, Minister, British Embassy in Washington, on 2 August 1942, he said that "it would always be open to himself and Chiang Kai-shek, if the situation should later make it appear desirable and opportune, to offer their good offices." Roosevelt clearly stated that he was not prepared to discourage Chiang Kai-shek from attempting to intervene on India.³⁰ Roosevelt's position was to undergo a significant change, in favour of Britain, after the arrest of the Congress leaders.

The British Government did not disclose anything to China about its contemplated action against the Congress. It was decided that Chiang should be informed only after necessary action against the Congress had been taken.³¹ It was on 11 August 1942 that the British Ambassador called on him to explain the British policy *vis-a-vis* the Congress. Expressing

28. *Ibid.*

29. Prime Minister (Churchill) to President (Roosevelt), 31 July 1942, *ibid.*, p. 533.

30. R. Campbell to Eden, 5 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 573.

31. Eden to H. Seymour, 7 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 612.

deep concern at the turn of events in India, Chiang Kai-shek told the Ambassador that the sudden arrest of the Congress leaders had barred a peaceful solution of the Indian problem. He did not agree with the British viewpoint that what was taking place in India was a Japanese inspired movement, and affirmed : "The present development is a natural reaction from the arrest of some of the leaders of the Congress. It is true that it impedes the war progress, but thus far I believe that the movement is still nationalistic and not under Japanese influence if the psychology of the Indian people is carefully studied." He also told the Ambassador that he had sent messages to Gandhi, Nehru and Azad ; and his wife (Madame Chiang) too had sent messages to Sarojini Naidu and Vijayalakshmi Pandit. He further asked that the Ambassador should request the Viceroy to allow his Resident Commissioner in New Delhi, Sheng Shoh-hua, to deliver the messages to the Congress leaders in person and to see Nehru individually "to ascertain his (Nehru's) true reaction to the present situation."³²

Immediately after his interview, Chiang Kai-shek sent a cable to President Roosevelt on 12 August, saying³³ :

At all costs the United Nations should demonstrate to the world by their action the sincerity of their professed principle of ensuring freedom and justice for men of all races. I earnestly appeal to you as the inspired author of the Atlantic Charter to take (effective query) measures which undoubtedly have already occurred to you to solve the pressing problem now facing India and the world... Your policy will serve as a guide to all of us who have resisted for so long and so bitterly the brute force of the aggressors.

This time also President Roosevelt passed the Chinese leader's message on to Churchill, adding his own query : "What do you think ?"³⁴

32. Horace Seymour, British Ambassador called on Chiang Kai-shek on 11 August 1942, *ibid* , pp. 676-8.

33. President (Roosevelt) to Prime Minister (Churchill), quoting Chiang Kai-shek's letter, 12 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 672.

34. President (Roosevelt) to Prime Minister (Churchill), 12 August 1942, *ibid.*

Amery, who was quite aware of these moves of Chiang Kai-shek, asked Churchill on the same day : "Most earnestly hope you will dissuade President (Roosevelt) in strongest terms from paying any attention to Generalissimo's mischievous and ignorant intervention... All the talk of Congress leaders wishing freedom for the sake of helping Allies is insincere eyewash."³⁵

No such effort on Churchill's part was really necessary. On the day that Amery sent his note to Churchill,³⁶ Roosevelt told the Pacific Council Meeting that he and Chiang Kai-shek had been corresponding on the Indian situation, and that he felt sure that they saw eye to eye on the *ultimate* objective. He, however, added that he had explained to Chiang Kai-shek "the hesitations he felt on the point of timing." He even said that "frankly he did not think India was ready to-day for complete independence." He further added that as Great Britain was a great friend of China and the United States, so the latter could not tell the British Empire what it must or must not do nor could they say to it, "we will arbitrate in this thing for you."³⁷ The President also wrote to Chiang Kai-shek the same day³⁸ :

I told the Pacific War Council to-day...that I think your position and mine should be to make it clear to the British Government and to Mr. Gandhi and his followers that we have not the moral right to force ourselves upon the British or the Congress party ; but that we should make it clear to both sides that you and I stand in the

35. Amery to Churchill, 12 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 674.

36. Churchill sent a cable to Roosevelt the next day expressing his strong resentment at the attitude of Chiang : "I take it amiss Chiang should seek to make difficulties between us and should interfere in matters about which he has proved himself most ill-informed which affect our sovereign rights... All Chiang's talk of Congress leaders wishing us to quit in order that they may help the Allies is eye-wash."

Churchill to his Private Office, enclosing a message for President Roosevelt to be sent through the US Embassy, 13 August 1942, *ibid.*, pp. 687-8.

37. R. Campbell to Eden, 12 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 675.

38. President Roosevelt to Chiang Kai-shek, 12 August 1942, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Vol. 1, The British Commonwealth and the Far East* (Washington, 1960), p. 716.

39. Home Political File No. 3/21/42.

position of friends who will gladly help if we are called on by both sides.

Linlithgow did not like the idea of the Chinese leader communicating with the arrested Congress leaders ; he was not ready to present "orchids" to Gandhi at that moment. The proposed interview of the Chinese Commissioner with the arrested Congress leaders was not permitted.³⁹ Linlithgow believed that it was not advisable "to convey any messages of this type to any of the addressees and that it would be an intolerable situation and deeply resented in this country by very important elements were there to be any evidence whatever of interference by China or any other outside power in our internal politics." In a personal message to Chiang Kai-shek, he said : "But recent action of Congress has left my Government and me with no alternative but to enforce the machinery of the law, and I fear that I could not agree to allow any communication to any of the leaders whom you have mentioned who are under restraint for illegal activities."⁴⁰

Supporting Linlithgow, Amery happily wrote : "Wholeheartedly approve your firm handling of Chiang Kai-shek's impertinent interference."⁴¹ Amery expressed his displeasure to Chiang Kai-shek for his attempts at communicating directly with the Congress leaders as well as for issuing pro-Congress public statements in China. Amery added a sting which was bound to reach home by reminding the Chinese leader : "Present Chinese action is in marked contrast with attitude adopted by His Majesty's Government last year at the time when Communist-Kuomintang differences were most acute"⁴² Churchill also sent a gentle admonition to Chiang Kai-shek on 27 August 1942⁴³ :

I think the best rule for Allies to follow is not to interfere in each other's internal affairs. We are resolved in every way to respect the sovereign rights of China...

40. Linlithgow to H. Seymour, 14 August 1942, *Mansergh*, n. 5, vol. 2, p. 695.

41. Amery to Linlithgow, 16 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 732.

42. Secretary of State to Government of India, External Affairs Department, 19 August 1942, *ibid.*, pp. 757-8.

43. Amery to Linlithgow, 27 August 1942, quoting Prime Minister's message to Chiang Kai-shek, 27 August 1942, *ibid.*, pp. 830-2.

With regard to the suggestion which Your Excellency has made that His Majesty's Government should accept the mediation of the President of the United States regarding their relations with the Indian Congress and generally with India, I should like to place on record the fact that no British Government of which I am the head, or a member, will ever be prepared to accept such mediation on a matter affecting the sovereign rights of His Majesty the King Emperor.

Chiang Kai-shek realized his helplessness *vis-a-vis* the British Government which was determined not to budge an inch. In a conciliatory mood he wrote to the Viceroy, on 26 September 1942, that his sole motive in suggesting that the Chinese Commissioner in India should interview the Congress leaders was the hope that thereby a *modus vivendi* would be more quickly arrived at. His one desire, he stressed, was to bring India wholeheartedly into the war, which outweighed every other consideration⁴⁴

Like the Chinese leader, the Chinese press also showed great concern with the Indian political situation. The official *Central Daily News* appealed to the British Indian Government to exercise forbearance and continue to look for a real settlement. The *Ta-King Pao* emphasised that 'India's struggle for freedom is identical with the war aims of the United Nations and we have no reason not to be sympathetic.'⁴⁵ Commenting on Gandhi's fast, the same paper said: 'The Indian nation has had the most calamities in the world. The fast is lamentable, but it is also due to this that the unification and independence of India is a gigantic task.'⁴⁶

44. Chiang Kai-shek to Linlithgow, 26 September 1942, *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 43. H. Seymour, the British Ambassador in China, wrote to Anthony Eden on 30 April 1943: "...the views of Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang Kai-shek on India are not likely to be affected by any appeal to reason. But I think it quite possible that Chiang Kai-shek could be brought to see, by arguments suggested, that expression (grp. undec) views at present time presents real dangers." *Ibid.*, p. 933.

45. Gandhi, n. 6, p. 65.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

III

American interest in India grew with the realisation that the safety and well being of thousands of American soldiers stationed in India, the security of their supply line to China, and preparations for a fresh attack on Burma, all required a peaceful and orderly India. After having been instrumental in the conception of the Cripps Mission, Americans changed their attitude and decided not to pressurize the British on the Indian issue. Indeed, they became progressively sympathetic to the British position.

When the news of the Wardha resolution of the CWC (14 July 1942) reached America, the press there interpreted it as an unreasonable Congress demand for immediate total withdrawal of British power from India. To intensify American opinion against the Congress, Stafford Cripps made a special broadcast to the United States on 27 July 1942, in which he denounced Gandhi and appealed to the American people to support Britain's efforts in "keeping India as a safe, orderly base for our joint operations against the Japanese." Stressing that Gandhi was opposed to the stationing of American troops in India, he observed⁴⁷ :

We cannot allow the action of a visionary, however distinguished in his fight for freedom in the past, to thwart the United Nations' drive for victory in the East... Whatever steps are necessary to that end we must take fearlessly.

I am sure that we in this country can rely on you to give us your understanding, your help and your support in doing whatever is necessary to maintain intact the front of the United Nations in India and to reopen the life-line of our gallant allies, the Chinese.

Cripps' broadcast made a favourable impact on the American press and public opinion. The *Baltimore Sun*, for example, assured Cripps to "have no worries about American support for the British stand in India" ; also sympathetic was the *Christian Science Monitor*.⁴⁸ Gandhi tried to convince the

47. *Manchester Guardian*, 27 July 1942.

48. M S. Venkataramani and B.K. Shrivastava, "America and the Indian

Americans and the Chinese that he had no pro-Axis sentiments, and published an "open letter" to the Japanese in the *Harijan* affirming his determination to oppose them if they advanced into India. Instead of creating a favourable opinion, the move acted as a boomerang in America. The *Washington Post* characterized Gandhi's statement as "meaningless if not downright hypocritical." The U.S. papers appealed to Gandhi to rally his people "against the foes of civilization, instead of planning with holy invocations and professions of piety to stab the United Nations in the back."⁴⁹

Gandhi was naturally hurt by this "chorus of indignation from Great Britain and America." He wrote an open letter "To American Friends" on 3 August 1942.⁵⁰ The appeal fell flat. "There is no evidence to indicate that Roosevelt, Hull and other leaders of America evinced at this or any other time, the slightest interest in Gandhiji's writings in the *Harijan*."⁵¹

On 5 August 1942, most of the leading American papers carried the story of the Allahabad papers, supported by the Government of India, giving the proceedings of the CWC meeting in the last week of April 1942, together with Gandhi's draft resolution. The *Washington Post* commented that the Indian nationalists, by adopting this course "at this extremely critically moment", had given "aid and comfort to the enemies of mankind." The paper wrote further: "They will brand themselves as traitors to civilization and by helping the enemies of freedom will make it abundantly clear that they do not merit the freedom they professedly seek."⁵² Another leading paper, the *New York Times*, commented⁵³:

Yet the affect of the proposed Congress resolution can only be to stab the United Nations in the back at the most critical hour of their struggle, and to bring into

Political Crisis, July-August 1942", *International Studies* (Bombay), vol. 6, no. 1, July 1964, pp. 16-7.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Harijan*, 9 August 1942. The message was written on 3 August, but published on the day Gandhi was arrested.

51. Venkataramani and Shrivastava, n. 48, p. 18.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

53. *New York Times*, 5 August 1942. The editorial was entitled "Confusion in India".

power over India a barbaric nation utterly without faith and without honour.

American public opinion, was alarmed by this sudden turn in Indian politics. Without going deep into the merit of the case, it apprehended that Gandhi's threat of organizing a mass movement at this juncture might give further impetus to the Japanese to invade India. The *New York World Telegram* struck a note of aggressive indifference by refusing to be perturbed by the *hara kiri* of the "Hindu nationalist blackmailers." The *New York Herald Tribune* condemned the attitude of the Congress leaders as a "dangerous appeal to disorder, division and defeatism in the face of an eager and waiting enemy." Papers like the *Baltimore Sun*, *Washington Star* and *Philadelphia Inquirer* assured full American support to the British Government and pleaded for the sternest measures against the Congress. The *Christian Science Monitor* described the struggle as "no longer one between India and the British but between the extreme elements in India and the entire family of the United Nations."⁵⁴

Understandably, perhaps, the American press had only one yardstick to measure every action of the British Government and of nationalist India : whether it would serve or hamper the Allied war effort. To keep the Indian scene favourable for war operations, it was indispensable that the political situation should be a settled one.

When the AICC met in Bombay to adopt the Quit India resolution, the *Chicago Daily News* jeered at the Congress as "one of the largest debating societies ever assembled." The *Washington Post* warned that "if Britain bent its knee before the Indian National Congress it would be remiss in its duties to the United Nations."⁵⁵ The *New York Times* suggested that the American attitude in the dispute between Britain and India should be that of an "impartial jury." After criticizing all the parties, *i.e.*, the British Government, the Indian nationalists and the Muslim League, the paper couched the verdict of the "jury in moral terms : "Any decision, any compromise, which helps

54. Venkataramani and Shrivastava, n. 48, pp 29-30.

For a survey of American press comments, see *The Hindu*, 6 and 9 August 1942 ; also *The Statesman* (Calcutta), 6 and 8 August 1942.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

with this war, and in winning it helps win freedom for all of us, India included, is good ; ...any decision, any compromise, which weakens the strength of the anti-Axis Powers is bad and evil."⁵⁶ Both *New York Times* and *Christian Science Monitor* were under the impression that the Congress was demanding wholesale British withdrawal from India. They believed that such an eventuality would lead to chaos and disorder in India.⁵⁷

There were some exceptions also. The *Socialist Call* of the Socialist Party of America, for example, extended whole-hearted support to the Indian nationalists. The *New Republic* called for a positive approach from the United States, and suggested a course of action similar to that advocated by Chiang Kai-shek.⁵⁸

The extraordinary situation that developed in India after the arrest of the Congress leaders forced the *New York Times* to realise the limits of coercion. While extending general support to Britain, it suggested that the latter, with the help of the United States or some others from the Allied camp, should do its utmost to settle the Indian question.⁵⁹ The paper argued : "But the British Government, while it is continuing to enforce order, can also continue properly and profitably to explore the possibilities of a settlement which will prepare the people of India for full self-government and make them legal allies in the war."⁶⁰

But the *Washington Post* wrote, in a leading article, that "no tear will be wasted on Gandhi and those Indian leaders who like him would, in the name of freedom, destroy it."⁶¹

After Churchill's parliamentary speech of 10 September 1942, the American press became less critical of the Indian nationalists' stand. As L.S. Amery wrote to Linlithgow⁶² :

I am afraid Winston's statement has been a bad boomerang ; at any rate in America, where it has undone almost

56. *New York Times*, 7 August 1942.

57. Venkataramani and Shrivastava, n. 48, p. 38.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 39 ; *Nation* (New York), 8 August 1942 ; *New Republic* (New York), 3 August 1942.

59. *New York Times*, 11 August 1942.

60. *Ibid.*, 23 August 1942.

61. Venkataramani and Shrivastava, n. 48, p. 46.

62. Amery to Linlithgow, 5 October 1942, Mansergh, n. 5, vol. 3, p. 98.

all the good work that Gandhi had previously been doing for us...I don't think he (Churchill) is capable of speaking sympathetically or with any conviction about Indian aspirations themselves, as apart from Congress and the difficulties of the immediate situation.

The *Nation* found in this speech of "an unrepentant imperialist" the declaration of war on the Indian National Congress. An important section of the U.S. press now began to advise the British Government to adopt a conciliatory policy in order to patch up its differences with nationalist India. There was also emerged a tendency to put the responsibility on the British Government for precipitating a crisis, "The trouble with a situation of this kind is that it rocks along and nothing is done until it is too late", commented Raymond Clapper in the *Washington Daily News*; a situation that could easily produce another Burma in India⁶³ The geo-political and strategic importance of India was emphasized; and papers like the *Washington Post* suggested the mediation of the United Nations to solve the Indian problem.⁶⁴

The American journalists, who came to India to cover the war news, became such sympathizers of the Indian nationalist cause that one of them, Louis Fischer, was labelled by the British Government not only "a dangerous international revolutionary" but also an "unscrupulous and tiresome journalist". His writings were severely censored in India.⁶⁵

American intellectuals, not altogether devoid of information about the Indian situation, viewed the Quit India demand in an unfavourable light. In fact, on 5 August 1942, a group of them appealed to the AICC to postpone its demand for immediate independence. They opined that the adoption of the resolution would "alienate American opinion and harm the cause of India."⁶⁶

63. Gandhi, n. 6, pp. 67-8.

64. *Washington Post*. 15 October 1942.

65. Governor General to Secretary of State for India, 31 May and 6 June 1943, Home Political File No. 33/19/43.

66. Venkataramani and Shrivastava, n. 48, p. 39. The signatories to the statement were—Herbert Agar, Alexander Sachs, Christian Guass, Henry P. Van Deusen, Henry W. Hobson, and Walter Millis. *Ibid.*

They tried to keep track of events in India after 9 August 1942. Another group of intellectuals published a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times*, urging President Roosevelt and Marshall Chiang Kai-shek to recognise the stake of the United Nations in the Indian dilemma, and asking them to use their good offices to arrange a conference of the interested Indian parties in order to facilitate India's entry into the rank of the Allies by "beginning now a programme of her independence."⁶⁷

On the occasion of the second anniversary of the August rebellion over a hundred Americans, including educationists, columnists and Church and Labour leaders, addressed an appeal to Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador for its onward transmission to the British Government. The appeal said that mass imprisonments had only complicated the Indian problem and made it difficult for Indians to join whole-heartedly in the war for world freedom. "To allow even belated justice to these prisoners would do much towards restoring confidence among millions of Asia's peoples." Every member of the United Nations should face the fact that the continued imprisonment of India's democratic leaders was an ever-present challenge to their professed war aims and a denial of those broad principles of human rights on which true civilization anywhere should be founded. "India's freedom is not India's question alone. It is a question of human liberty. So long as suppression of justice is allowed to continue in India liberty is threatened everywhere in the world."⁶⁸

67. The signatories to this advertisement were : Clare Boothe, George S. Counts, Fanny Hurst, Bishop Francis J. McConnell and Henry Hariman ; *Gandhi*, n. 6, pp. 65-6. The editor of the *Life* magazine also published an open letter addressed to the people of England, urging that India should be made free. *Life* (New York), 8 November 1942.

68. Some of the signatories to this appeal were Louis Broomfield, Pearl Buck, John Childs, Albert Einstein, Louis Fischer, John Gunther, Frank Kingdom, Max Lerner, Clare Luce. Bishop Francis McConnell, Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, James Patton, Victor Reuther, Leland Stowe, Richard J. Walsh, Mathew Woll, Louis Adamic, Stuart Chase, Freda Kirchway, Upton Sinclair and William Shirer ; Home Political File No. 4/6/44.

But the Senate did not try to put any pressure on the President in regard to the Indian question. Nor did it interest the American political parties. Trade unions and other labour organizations seemed to be equally unconcerned about it.⁶⁹

Nevertheless, the spectre of a Japanese conquest of the Indian sub-continent was haunting the minds of many American politicians and intellectuals. For this reason alone, many of them were insisting that America should not remain, an indifferent onlooker. Criticising the American attitude, Wendell L. Willkie, the Republican Presidential candidate in 1940 wrote on the basis of first-hand experience that much as they would like to count on the U.S.A., the people of the East "cannot tell from our vague and vacillating talk whether or not we really do stand for freedom, or what we mean by freedom."⁷⁰

Indian students in America also helped in propagating news about the Indian National Congress. The India League engaged itself in publishing brochures, organizing lectures and disseminating Indian news among Americans. Anup Singh, K.J. Shridharani, H.T. Majumdar, J.J. Singh, Louis Fischer, Richard Gregg, J. Homes-Smith and Pearl Buck were some of the constant pro-Congress campaigners in the country. Apart from them the Institute of Pacific Relations and study groups like those of the Quakers and conscientious objectors also served as channels for Congress propaganda.⁷¹

In order to counteract the Congress propaganda, the Government of India first published and distributed freely, *Fifty Facts About India* in different parts of America. Later on it distributed *The Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances in India* 1942-43. These materials, it seemed, could not make much headway in influencing American public opinion. The British Government thought that its failure in propaganda was due to lack of American perspective and understanding of the whole situation. According to the British, the Americans minimised the importance of the minorities, and there lay the complexity of the whole situation. It was also emphasized that

69. Venkataramani and Shrivastava, n. 48, p. 39.

70. Wendell L. Willkie, *One World* (Bombay, 1943), Indian edn., p. 131.

71. Home Political File No. 20/2/43.

many anti-British centres in America were helping in carrying out Congress propaganda.⁷²

Since early 1942, official circles in Washington could realise that nationalist sentiment in India was hostile to Britain and somewhat critical of the United Nations. The United States made some attempts to appease the Indian nationalist sentiments. Just before the Quit India movement Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote a letter to Gandhi. This was, in fact, a reply to Gandhi's letter of 1 July. The President expressed his keenness to carry on the war effort, and invited Gandhi to join the venture: "I shall hope that our common interest in democracy and righteousness will enable your countrymen and mine to make a common cause against a common enemy."⁷³ Though the President signed the letter on 1 August, it was despatched on 5 August, and could not reach Gandhi before his arrest.

When the Quit India campaign began, there was no Personal Representative of the President in New Delhi. After the departure of Louis Johnson, the post had remained vacant for some time. However, the Officer-in-Charge and other members of the staff correctly assessed the situation and generally gave a correct picture of the situation to Washington. In these reports it was mentioned that the British Government's repressive measures would have merely a temporary success and would only drive the movement underground. It was also assumed that the sudden arrest of Gandhi and other Congress leaders had turned a non-violent movement into a violent one.⁷⁴ The American staff did not feel optimistic about the improvement of the situation in the immediate future. They believed that without a positive programme from the British, Indians would not be able to come to any political settlement.⁷⁵

72. Report on American opinion, period from May 1942—February 1943, *ibid.*

73. Roosevelt to Gandhi, 1 August 1942, *Foreign Relations of the United States* 1942, n. 38. p. 703.

74. Officer-in-Charge (Merrel) to Secretary of State (Cordell Hull), 10 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 712.

75. Officer-in-Charge (Haselton) to Secretary of State (Cordell Hull), 5 September 1942, *ibid.*, p. 731.

Washington was quite aware of these new developments in India. The American press and a group of leftist intellectuals were putting pressure on President Roosevelt to intervene in India. He was also being pressed by Marshal Chiang Kai-shek to do something for the settlement of the Indian problem. Even President Avila Camacho of Mexico requested Roosevelt, "to join with the Soviet Government in offering mediation between the Indian National Congress and the British Government with a view to preventing great loss of life in India and with a view to further Indian independence."⁷⁶

But Washington did nothing of the sort. Instead, the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull met the British Ambassador Lord Halifax on 17 September 1942, and suggested to him the necessity of holding a conference of both sides (India and Britain), which might produce a most wholesome psychological effect on public opinion in other nations and in India as well.⁷⁷ The President was unwilling to go further than this. He did not like to be a partisan of either Great Britain or India⁷⁸ :

We can in a friendly spirit talk bluntly and earnestly to appropriate British officials so long as they understand that it is our purpose to treat them in a thoroughly friendly way. A settlement arising from such friendly and non-partisan conversations with both sides or with either side, would probably be most practicable as well as most desirable.

The State Department, which was for some time looking for a skillful diplomat to head the New Delhi Mission, finally decided to send William Phillips. The traumatic situation in India had also necessitated an immediate appointment. Both New Delhi and London welcomed Phillips' appointment. After assuming his office, he reported that the Executive Councillors had no popular following, and that they represented only the voice of the Viceroy. They and the six hundred British Indian civil servants were interested in maintaining the *status quo*, because their livelihood depended on India.⁷⁹

76. *Ibid.*, p. 717.

77. The Secretary of State's Memorandum : Interview with the British Ambassador, 17 September 1942, *ibid.*, p. 734.

78. Secretary of State's Memorandum to US Ambassador in United Kingdom, 20 November 1942, *ibid.*, p. 747.

79. Personal Representative of the President in India (William Phillips),

During Gandhi's fast, as has been discussed earlier, Phillips had to bear the brunt of public pressure.⁸⁰ Phillips realized that it was a double-edged problem, *i.e.*, (i) to pressure the so-called white prestige in India, and (ii) to safeguard India as a military base against Japan and ensure future American relations with all the coloured races.⁸¹ It seems he was convinced by the Indian nationalist opinion, and wrote : "Whatever persuasion we can exercise over the British can be done better now than when the general scramble begins for post-war settlement"⁸² Phillips saw that both Churchill and Linlithgow were disinterested in resolving the Indian deadlock. As the war approached its end and their power tended to increase, the British seemed reluctant to come to some understanding with the Indian nationalist aspirations. With a view to ending the political impasse, Phillips suggested a plan to President Roosevelt according to which the Congress leaders would be released immediately to allow them to participate in a conference presided over by an American, and patronized by the King-Emperor, the President of the United States, the President of Soviet Union and Chiang Kai-shek of China. "American chairmanship", he said, "would have the advantage, not only of expressing the interest of America in the future independence of India, but would also be a guarantee to the Indians of British offer of independence."⁸³ But he was overestimating American influence over Britain.

The unyielding attitude of the British was revealed by the refusal to allow a group of moderate leaders to interview

to Secretary of State (C. Hull). 8 January 1943, *ibid.*, vol. 4, 1943, pp. 181-2.

80. "It is becoming more and more evident through press, leading articles and personal appeals that good officers—of some sort by the United States are looked for and that my silence is being unfavourably commented upon." Personal Representative of the President in India (William Phillips) to Secretary of State (C. Hull), 12 February 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 191-2.

81. Personal Representative of the President in India (William Phillips) to Secretary of State (C. Hull), 19 February 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 196-7.

82. Personal Representative of the President in India (William Phillips) to President, 23 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 203.

83. Personal Representative of the President in India (William Phillips) to President, 3 March 1943, *ibid.*, p. 207.

Gandhi. It further convinced Phillips that the Viceroy had no desire to see the deadlock ended.⁸⁴ Phillips himself made an attempt to secure the Viceroy's permission to interview Gandhi and Nehru in order to acquire a first hand knowledge of the Congress position.⁸⁵ He also met with a curt refusal from the Viceroy.

Phillips was disappointed. He felt that his assessment of the situation without a meeting with the Congress leaders was bound to be one-sided and incomplete. Afraid that Indians were convinced that "America stands solidly with the British in the past, present and future Indian policies of the British Government," Phillips appealed to his President, "to try with every means in our power to make Indians feel that America is with them and in a position to go beyond mere public assurances of friendship."⁸⁶

Some of the officers of the State Department in Washington responded favourably to these ideas. They felt that Americans were morally bound by the Atlantic charter to support the Indian cause. An official in the Department wrote: "I think we would be in a very vulnerable position in the future if we adopt an overcautious attitude in situations of this kind merely because we fear that the British might not like it." He feared that the tide of Asian opinion would turn against America if it did not do anything on the Indian question.⁸⁷

These were but minor chinks in the solid pro-British phalau in the State Department. The American policy remained unchanged. Washington remained silent and did absolutely nothing on the question of Phillips' interview with the Congress leaders. Rather, it held the view that Phillips' proposed visit to Gandhi might arouse such "unjustified hopes" in India as the expectation of American intervention.⁸⁸

Phillips did not give up his efforts to end the political impasse in India. From the very beginning of his diplomatic career in

84. Personal Representative of the President in India (William Phillips) to Secretary of State (C. Hull), 2 April 1943, *ibid.*, p. 210.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 212.

86. Personal Representative of the President in India (William Phillips) to President, 19 April 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 217-9.

87. Memorandum by Adviser on Political Relations to Under Secretary of State, 6 April 1943, *ibid.*, p. 213.

88. Gandhi, n. 6, pp. 240-1.

India, he had believed that he had a mission to perform in India. He was confident that a definite advance, possibly a settlement with nationalist India, could be reached—probably in the direction of the establishment of a provisional Government.⁸⁹ Till the time of his departure, Phillips went on pressing Linlithgow to arrive at some interim solution of the Indian problem. Any transitory solution, he believed, would justify his mission in India, and would improve the President's position in America. But Linlithgow was "entirely clear that we must stand firm and not compromise ourselves and the future in the hope of buying off well-intentioned, but irresponsible and uninformed, criticism in the U.S.A. or elsewhere."⁹⁰ When the news came that Phillips was not returning to India soon, Linlithgow felt immensely happy. He told Amery that he was pretty clear, in the light of experience with both Phillips and Johnson that "the dangers of having a personal representative of the President in India greatly outweigh any possible advantages."⁹¹

Phillips was not inactive in the United States. On 14 May 1943, he wrote to Roosevelt⁹² :

If we do nothing and merely accept the British point of view that conditions in India are none of our business then we must be prepared for various serious consequences in the internal situation in India which may develop as a result of despair and misery and anti-white sentiments of hundreds of millions of subject people...Such a British gesture, Mr. President, will produce not only a tremendous psychological stimulus to flagging morale through Asia and facilitate our military operations in that theatre, but it will also be proof positive to all people—our own and the British included—that this is not a war of power politics but a war for all we say it is.

89. Linlithgow to Amery, 28 January 1943, Mansergh, n. 5, vol. 3 pp. 554-5.

90. Linlithgow to Amery, 26 April 1943, *ibid.*, p. 911.

91. Linlithgow to Amery, 2 June 1943, *ibid.*, p. 1037.

92. William Phillips' (Personal Representative of the President in India) Report to the President, 14 May 1943, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1943*, n. 38, vol. 4, p. 222.

Phillips pleaded in vain. The Governments in London as also in New Delhi were keeping close track of the American attitude towards the Indian problem. Both Amery and Linlithgow viewed pro-Indian American feelings as "American sentimentalism" which had been aroused by "total ignorance of the problem."⁹³ Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador in Washington, observed : "My own temper is often sorely tried by the ignorance amongst our friends even in high quarters... And to this must always be added even less informed criticism some of which unconsciously derives I suspect from German promptings."⁹⁴ The British were unhappy that American presence in India and British reliance on American war supplies gave the Americans an opportunity "to put the screw on Great Britain."⁹⁵ There was no doubt that President Roosevelt was under immense pressure from different quarters to intervene.⁹⁶ It was generally assumed^{*} that Madame Chiang Kai-shek and Mr. Roosevelt were also behind these pressures.⁹⁷

The general American opinion on the question of American intervention was best expressed by an ordinary American citizen. Writing from California to a friend in India on 23 October 1942, he said⁹⁸ :

I think the Indians are waiting for the U.S.A. to solve their problems and before this war is over I believe we will have a hand in the affairs of India as well as all other parts of the globe. It looks like we will have to police the world, England can never do it and seems to be waiting for someone else to fight her battles for her. She will find out we are ready and we would not stop until our armies, ship and planes are based all over the world.

93. Amery to Linlithgow, Richard Law's report on the United States Mansergh, n 5, vol. 3, p. 254. Linlithgow to Amery, 10 October 1942, *ibid.*, p. 123.

94. Halifax (Washington) to Linlithgow, 25 September 1942, *ibid.*, p. 42.

95. Note by Patrick, India Office, London, 24 September 1942, *ibid.*, p. 30.

96. Anthony Eden to Amery, 23 September 1942, *ibid.*, p. 28.

97. Amery to Linlithgow, 19 February 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 698-9.

98. N.N. Richardson of California, U.S.A., 23 September 1942, Home Political File No. 20/2/43.

American official policy continued to be indecisive throughout this period. It could not acquire clarity owing to the anxiety of the U.S. Government not to bedevil Anglo-American relations for the sake of India. The Americans could do nothing concrete to relax political tensions in India. The general American attitude, however, was not entirely without significance for the future.

IV

Unlike in China and America, the Quit India movement produced only faint echoes in the Soviet Union. It is a well known fact that the Indian question till the other day was occupying an important position in the Communist International's thinking as well as in the Soviet foreign policy perspective. The lack of Soviet interest in India in 1942 was due not to any shifting of emphasis in its long-term foreign policy objective, but to the fact that the Soviet people were then engaged in a life and death struggle and had hardly any time to think about other matters. On top of it, the recent military pact (12 July 1941) that the Soviets had concluded with Great Britain had also restrained the Soviet press and the public from criticizing British colonial policy. There was also the fact that a part of British assistance was reaching the Soviet Union from India. In particular Britain was supplying considerable non-lethal materials to the Soviet Union from India.⁹⁹ At one time there was even some discussion about permitting a Soviet representative to stay in India to facilitate the supply work.¹⁰⁰

Indeed, Soviet policy was so much war-oriented that instead of supporting Indian aspirations, it remained preoccupied with the full utilization of India's war potentialities, resources, and organization.¹⁰¹ The Soviet press did not publish any important article on India during this time. A recent study points out¹⁰² :

99. *The Times*, 10 June 1943.

100. Zafar Imam, *Colonialism in East-West Relations ; A Study of Soviet Policy Towards India and Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-47* (New Delhi, 1969), p. 446.

101. *Ibid.*

102. *Ibid.*, p. 449.

It is interesting to note that during 1941-1942, *Pravda* consistently and correctly reported the important speeches of Churchill on India, including his outright denunciation of the Indian National Congress and other political parties... But *Pravda* generally ignored the deliberations of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress (including the Quit India resolution) ; although when it did report these, it gave prominence to that part of the Indian National Congress resolutions which expressed readiness to participate in the war. On the other hand, it completely ignored the explosive situation in India during the Quit India movement.

Towards the end of the year 1942, however, an article entitled "The Situation in India" written by S. Melman appeared in the official organ of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, *World Economy and World Politics*. It described the events leading to the Quit India movement, the movement itself and its suppression by the Government. It appreciated the role of the Communist Party of India and praised its efforts to step up production and war mobilization. The author felt that the time was not yet opportune for Britain to open negotiations with the Congress. He believed that the Congress could not claim to be the sole representative of India. In an indirect way, however, the author admitted that political deadlock must be resolved for making possible the fullest mobilization of India's resources. "The question of participation of India is of great significance. Hence the regularization of Anglo-Indian relations is of great importance at the present time."¹⁰³

Stalin certainly was not totally oblivious of the fact that the Soviet Union would have to support the liberation movements in the colonies against the imperialist forces. In course of his speech at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the October Revolution, on 6 November 1942, he said that the programme of action of the Anglo-Soviet-American coalition was : abolition of racial exclusiveness ; equality of nations and integrity of their

103. *Ibid.*, p. 451. On 1 August 1943, the same paper, *World Economy and World Politics*, urged India to mobilize all her resources to meet the Japanese invasion. David N. Drube, *Soviet Russia and Indian Communism 1917-1947* (New York, 1959), p. 237.

territories ; liberation of the enslaved nations and the restoration of their sovereign rights ; the right of every nation to manage its affairs in its own way ; economic aid to nations that had suffered, and assistance in establishing their material welfare ; restoration of democratic liberties and destruction of the Hitlerite regime.¹⁰⁴

After 1942, Soviet interest in India further diminished. May be, all the Allied powers were now busy taking steps to conclude the war successfully and within the shortest possible time. It could well be imagined that Stalin was convinced by Churchill's logic that the maintenance of the *status quo* in British India was one of the prerequisites for bringing the war to a successful and timely end. President Roosevelt also lent support to this view.¹⁰⁵

V.

The "Quit India" call and the subsequent trend of nationalist politics upset many Britons, including some of Gandhi's friends and admirers. The *Times* reacted very sharply to the Wardha resolution of the CWC¹⁰⁶ :

Civil disobedience has brought India no profit in the past and can yield nothing now, except temporary disorder and worse internal divisions. It is a threat which is, in

104. Joseph Stalin, *The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union* (New York, 1945), p. 65.

Commenting on the attitude of the Russian people towards India, Nehru says : "What those in authority, or people generally, in Russia thought about India it was impossible to say. They were far too busy with their stupendous war effort, and with driving the invader from their country, to think of matters of no immediate concern to them. Yet they were used to thinking far ahead and they were not likely to ignore India which touched their frontiers in Asia. What their future policy would be no one could say, except that it would be realistic and principally concerned with adding to the political and economic strength of the U S S R." While noting that they had "carefully avoided all reference to India," he quoted the passage from Stalin's speech of 6 November 1942, which has been given above.

Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Bombay, 1969), p. 492.

105. Imam, n. 100, p. 453.

106. *The Times*, 15 July 1942.

fact, directed against the war effort and the security of India and the purposes of the United Nations. No disclaimer can vary this inevitable truth. The real tragedy today, more vividly seen than ever against the background of a world upheaval, is that Mr. Gandhi's great hold upon the Indian people should have been perverted to this game of political tactics.

Reverting to the subject on 3 August, the *Times* reminded the British Government that India's potentialities as the greatest power in South East Asia made her "an indispensable factor in any plans for the protection of that area against aggression." The paper pleaded for mutual understanding of the problem and emphasized that questions of personal, sectional or national prestige should not come in the way.¹⁰⁷

When the Congress moved to ratify the Quit India resolution on 8 August 1942, the *Times* commented: "It is a startling commentary not on the sincerity, but on the sense of reality and proportion of the Congress leaders." It termed the Congress call for non-violent action as a "declaration of war against Britain," and stressed the need for Britain to fulfill two important responsibilities in India: to organize the military defence, and to build up the structure of Indian unity.¹⁰⁸ Supporting the Government's action against the Congress leaders and the organization, the *Times* wrote: "Once the decision to act had been taken, the Government had no option but to act vigorously and effectively and this it has done." At the same time, it advised that while standing resolutely against "a policy of disorder and disruption," the Government should work towards the attainment of a national self-Government; repression, unaccompanied by any constructive policy, was likely to prove as vain and ineffective in war as in peace.¹⁰⁹

The *Manchester Guardian* warned that the Wardha resolution promised "a barren victory whoever wins." Confident that independence would come to India in "a short few years' time," the paper advised the Congress leaders to abandon the path of agitational politics and trust the British Government.

107. *Ibid.*, 3 August 1942.

108. *Ibid.*, 10 August 1942.

109. *Ibid.*, 12 August 1942.

To ensure such a peaceful passage, the *Guardian* appealed to the Viceroy to convene a conference to discuss the formation of a National Government with Indian representatives.¹¹⁰ It also made it clear that Amery could not evade his responsibility by saying that "we have done all in our power." Both the Government and the Congress had to be more amenable to reason and alive to their responsibilities than they had hitherto been.¹¹¹ In this connection the British had to realise that no "sense of our dignity, no conviction of our own good motives, no resentment at the irresponsibility of Congress should prevent us from joining with all whom we can call in aid to help us to a settlement."¹¹² Mere implementation of a drastic policy would engender formidable bitterness. "We cannot indefinitely keep tens of thousands of Hindus in prison," warned the *Guardian*, "some day we shall have to make our peace with them if peace there is to be."¹¹³

Even papers representing left wing opinion, like the *New Statesman and Nation* and *Daily Herald*, were critical of the Congress resolution. However, they also pleaded for a settlement with the Indians, if necessary with the help of the Chinese and the Americans.¹¹⁴

The *Daily Herald*, the Labour party organ, asked the Congress not to press its demands at that moment : "You will cripple your cause and humble the influence of us who are your proud and faithful advocates...."¹¹⁵ At the same time it impressed upon Churchill the prudence of getting rid of his "fatalistic state of mind" towards the Indian problem. Criticising the British policy of "asserting authority but shirking leadership," it emphasized that the time was not only ripe but overripe for a new initiative. India was asking Britain to do her duty as the Paramount Power. "However great the diffi-

110. *Manchester Guardian*, 17 July 1942.

111. *Ibid.*, 1 August 1942.

112. *Ibid.*, 4 August 1942.

113. *Ibid.*, 10 August 1942.

114. *Ibid.*, 13 August 1942.

115. *Ibid.*, 26 February 1943.

116. *New Statesman and Nation*, 25 July 1942.

117. *Daily Herald*, 21 July 1942.

culties, however remote the prospect of success, the Government should respond to that desire."¹¹⁶

Another left-wing paper, the *News Chronicle*, observed : "Both Britain and India desire in their mutual interest the victory of the United Nations and defeat of the aggressors. Cannot both sides even now if occasion be created, rise to the full heights of their greatness and determine on an agreement ?"¹¹⁷

Gradually, the *Chronicle* became progressively critical of the British stand. On 18 March 1943, it commented : "Only the imperialists of the worst kind can contemplate an indefinite continuance of the present deadlock and of our present refusal to allow discussions with and with among the prisoners."¹¹⁸

The Conservative press was vehemently critical of the whole movement. "We cannot abandon," the *Sunday Express* commented, "the Indian Empire to the non-violent Hindus or savage Japan."¹¹⁹ The *Daily Mail* branded the Congress demand as "definitely Quisling in intention," and asserted that by launching a mass movement, the Congress would play at the hands of the enemies.¹²⁰ Using history to fortify its advice to the Government, the *Mail* wrote : "We are paying for our past weakness... From now onward we should rule."¹²¹

The *Spectator* also pleaded for strong action¹²² :

No terms can be made with rebellion, there can be no negotiation with Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Nehru, nor of course, as Sir Stafford Cripps emphasized repeatedly, can there be any question of a major constitutional change, such as the grant of immediate independence would involve, in the middle of the war.

The general tenor of the British press reaction elated the Government of India. The Information Department reported

118. *Ibid.*, 9 October 1942.

119. *News Chronicle*, 7 October 1942.

120. *Ibid.*, 18 March 1943.

121. *Sunday Express*, 10 August 1942.

122. *Daily Mail*, 4 August 1942.

123. *Ibid.*, 10 August 1942.

124. *Spectator*, 14 August 1942 ; article entitled "India's Opportunity," pp. 143-4.

with obvious glee that "public opinion in England is angry, a very rare phenomenon and incidentally in the present circumstances a sign that His Majesty's Government's policy is believed to be honest and fair to India."¹²³ But the elation contained a touch of concern. Both the Government of India and India Office in London were worried by the critical stand of the *Times*. Amery complained that its editor, Barrington Ward, was "under the baneful influence of E.H. Carr."¹²⁴ Unlike his predecessor, Ward never visited the India Office for consultation. Nor did he confer with Amery.¹²⁵ Whatever the reason for the critical attitude of the *Times*, from the viewpoint of the Government it was "a real tragedy, given its importance, that it should show this tendency to go against us : for whether it talks nonsense or not, it carries very great weight and its hostility is as important as its support."¹²⁶

Some minor interest groups, such as the British Council of Churches, the India League, India Conciliation Group, Women's International League, National Council of Civil Liberty and the Communist Party of Great Britain, also pleaded for the settlement of the Indian problem.¹²⁷ The India League under the active leadership of V.K. Krishna Menon helped in broadcasting the Congress ideas in Britain. By publishing and distributing propaganda literature and organizing lecture-tours, it created a good deal of public sympathy for the Congress cause. It also enlisted the active support of some Labour M.P.s like Reginald Sorensen and Pethick Lawrence. Furthermore, the National Peace Council, the Society of Friends, and the Council for International Recognition of Indian Independence backed the demand for Indian independence.¹²⁸ Many

125. F.H. Puckle's (Secretary, Department of Information and Broadcasting) report, Home Political File No. 3/101/42.

126. Amery to Linlithgow, 9 October 1942, Mansergh, n. 5, vol. 3, p. 114.

127. Amery to Linlithgow, 13 October, 1942, *ibid.*, p. 126.

128. Linlithgow to Amery, 30 November 1942, *ibid.*, p. 324.

129. Gandhi, n. 6, pp. 212-5.

130. The National Peace Council sent a cable to Linlithgow on 26 December 1942, urging him to make a fresh effort to end the Indian deadlock. The following persons signed the cable: Sir Arthur Eddington, the Bishop of Birmingham, Dr. E.W. Barnes, the Chief

British missionaries and leftist intellectuals like Harold Laski, C.E.M. Joad and Julian Huxley, too, supported the Indian cause. On behalf of the Union of Democratic Control, they sent messages to Indian leaders like Rajagopa'achari, M.R. Jayakar and others for their success in their conciliatory moves.¹²⁹

The attitude of the British Parliament, however, was different. The House of Commons discussed the Indian situation on 11 September 1942. Very few members took part in the debate, and only three of them made a strong criticism of the Government's policy.¹³⁰ On 8 October 1942, when James Maxton introduced a motion that Amery should open negotiations for settlement with India, it was lost by 360 votes to 17.¹³¹ Only a few Independents, Liberals and independent Labour party members criticized the Government's policy. The Whitehall was deeply absorbed with the war issue. It had little to discuss the Indian situation. The Labour party, now a partner in the coalition Government, was morally committed to support the official policy. The British Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress in a joint statement on 12 August declared¹³² :

The Labour Movement believes that the establishment of a free India in the post-war world is secure and is not endangered by any possibility of evasion or procrastination by the British Government. The world knows that there is now agreement on the principle of Indian freedom...

Rabbi, Dr. J.H. Hertz, Lady Parmoor and the Dean of Canterbury, Dr. Hewlett Johnson. *Ibid.*, pp. 83, 84.

William Cove, the Chairman of the Council for International Recognition of Indian Independence in a statement on 12 September 1943 said : "The Council emphasized that Indian independence is a world issue and one upon which it is incumbent to secure the guarantee of Allied nations." *Ibid.*, p. 267.

131. Others who signed the cable were : Lords Morley and Strabolgi, C.G. Ammon, E.J. Bellenger, J.J. Davidson, G. Haden Guest, Dame Elizabeth Cadbury, Mrs. Corbett Ashby, Mrs. Pathick Lawrence, Barbara Eyrton Gould, Dr. Hewlett Johnson, Sir John Maynard and Prof. C.H. Reill. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
132. UK, Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, series 5, vol. 383, session 1942, cols. 553-627.
133. *Ibid.*, vol. 386.
134. *Manchester Guardian*, 13 August 1942.

The Labour party's disapproval of the Quit India movement was further revealed by Arthur Greenwood, the Labour party leader, who commented : "Mahatma Gandhi appears to be utterly oblivious of the urgency and gravity of the world situation. With great respect to him, I must say that he has shirked major issues."¹³³

Winston Churchill, the Conservative party leader and Prime Minister, who had dubbed the Congress an organization of lawyers, money-lenders and Hindu priesthood, further expressed his determination not to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire. He along with Amery and Linlithgow formed a diehard conservative triumvirate which was committed to a policy of non-conciliation with the Congress. Many leaders of the Allied countries pleaded in vain with Churchill to soften his attitude. Even a former adversary of Gandhi, Field Marshal Smuts of South Africa, who expected civil disobedience to peter out within no time, considered it impolitic to keep leaders interned without making another move towards settlement. He was afraid "that it would be dangerous both from the point of view of general world opinion and that of internal Indian peace to sit tight after civil disobedience has finally collapsed."¹³⁴

But the mounting tide of Indian nationalism was beginning to make dents even in the conservative stronghold, more so as international opinion also was at least partially sympathetic to the Indian cause. Consequently no other person than Amery had to confess : "The idea that we shall be able to hang on indefinitely against the growing tide of Indian nationalism seems to me out of the question, even if there were a united public opinion here to support it."¹³⁵ He went further and said : "It is Indian nationalism and not Indian pseudo-democracy that somehow or other we have got to meet."¹³⁶

Here was the dawn of a new consciousness within the diehard sections of the Conservative party. If this was true of the

135. Arthur Greenwood's statement, 16 August 1942, N.N. Mitra (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register* (Calcutta, n.d.), vol. 2, 1942, p. 20.

136. Field Marshal Smuts to Amery, 1 September 1942, Mansergh, n. 5, vol 2 (London, 1971), pp. 877-8.

137. Amery to Linlithgow, 13 November 1942, *ibid*, vol. 3, p. 251.

138. Amery to Linlithgow, 8 February 1943, *ibid.*, p. 637.

diehard elements of the Conservative party, the trend of thinking among other sections of British public life can be easily imagined. The Quit India movement could legitimately claim some measure of credit for the emergence of this trend. This, indeed, constitutes one of the more significant aspects of the impact of that movement.

CONCLUSION

THERE seems, in retrospect, to have been an air of inevitability about the Quit India movement. Once the Second World War had broken out, it was certain that the British would make India contribute the maximum in men and material to their war effort. Also certain was that the Indian National Congress would link India's participation in the war with her march towards independence.

Apparently there was no irreconcilability between the British and the Indian positions. Theoretically speaking, India might well have willingly joined the Allied camp, and also moved towards independence. What made the two positions diametrical was the natural urge of nationalism to race towards freedom, and the equally natural tendency of imperialism to delay its own demise. Moreover, the climate of suspicion, endemic in such a relationship, was unlikely to encourage either party to trust the post-dated promises of the other. The British seemed none too keen to take at their face value the Congress assurances that self-dependent India would contribute generously to the Allied war effort ; and Indians looked in vain for reasons to feel satisfied with British promises of independence after the war, especially as the memory of British behaviour after the First World War was still fresh and far from reassuring.

The political situation resembled a blind alley. The Congress was prepared to commit India to the Allied cause ; but only after its demand for India's independence had been conceded. The British, similarly, were prepared to enlarge the

area of responsible government in India and even promise independence after the war; but during the war ultimate British control must continue. Conflicting interests and mutual fears confined to keep the alley blind in spite of efforts by a number of parties to create some way out of it.

The failure of the Cripps Mission, which provided the crucial prelude to the Quit India movement, must be seen against this background. For while independence was promised after the war, it was to remain circumscribed by and subject to the fulfilment of certain conditions, which were found unacceptable by the Congress. These were the underlying assumptions of the Cripps plan which represented the farthest limits of concessions the British were prepared to make at a time when they were passing through the most critical phase of the war. Even Cripps would not be permitted to enlarge these limits. What is, therefore, surprising is not that the Congress finally came forward with the Quit India call, but that it waited so long—almost three years since the outbreak of the war—before it did.

The Congress has been criticised for adopting the Quit India demand in so far as going into the wilderness at a crucial juncture meant leaving the Muslim League free to exploit the political situation to its own advantage. Rendered plausible by the partition of India, this argument rests on misuse of hindsight: it invests the Congress with a choice which it did not have during 1939-42. Committed, by 1939, to a definite stand on the issue of war, the Congress could scarcely have risked its credibility by agreeing to contribute to the war effort without a firm assurance of independence after the war and immediate transfer of effective power to Indians. And thus the British were determined not to concede.

How important for the Congress was the acceptance of its basic conditions before it joined the Allies is indicated by the refusal of the CWC to accept Gandhi's initial advice that the Congress should confine itself to extending only moral support to Britain, and that it should do so without any conditions. Since at least 1936, if not 1927 when it had passed a resolution against Fascist aggression, the Congress had been formulating its position regarding the war issue. It was based on a pragmatic appreciation of the possibility to utilise, in the

event of war, the British need for India's support to hasten the country's march towards independence. Idealism was added to pragmatism to advance the argument that only a free country could fight enthusiastically for the freedom of others.

The crucial decision of the Congress to stick to this demand was made when the Working Committee issued its statement on 15 September 1939, opposing the use of Indian men and money for the British war effort without the consent of the Indian people, demanding a clarification of the British war aims and of the steps to be taken to apply them to India, and making India's willingness to cooperate with the war effort contingent on a satisfactory British response to this demand.

After that it was impossible for the Congress to settle for something less than an assurance of complete independence after the end of the war and transfer of effective power in the immediate present. With every failure of negotiations with the British, the Congress found itself driven towards a struggle, which it was all the time keen to avoid. In 1941 it contented itself with individual civil disobedience; but in 1942 it felt compelled by the logic of events to opt for a mass struggle.

Ironically enough, it was Gandhi, after having suggested a different line in 1939 and after being largely responsible for restricting the civil disobedience movement of 1941 to selected individuals, who now wedded the Congress to mass struggle. What was more ironical, the opposition to this move came from Nehru, whose line, accepted in 1939, had eventually led to a situation where the Congress had no alternative but to court mass struggle. Gandhi, of course, did much to accommodate Nehru by relating his demand to the British to "Quit India" with the victory of the United Nations, and by agreeing to India playing her full part in bringing out this victory once her own freedom was assured.

It does appear surprising that the Congress leadership failed to draw up a clear programme of action even when it had decided to give the call for a mass movement. It betrayed almost unbelievable naivety by assuming that while it was creating an inflammable situation in the country the Government would be sitting idle. Yet such an assumption alone could explain the action of the Congress leadership in not being

ready with a plan of action, and instead preparing to open a correspondence with the Viceroy and with the leaders of the United Nations when the Quit India resolution was adopted on 8 August 1942. It is not surprising that the Government decided not to give them an opportunity to do so thereafter.

While the Congress leaders thus failed to anticipate the moves of the Government, the sequel to their arrest showed that they had shown remarkable understanding of the mood of the Indian people. For there took place now a spontaneous uprising in almost every part of the country, though its intensity varied from place to place. While it was strong in Bihar, U.P., Maharashtra and Gujarat, it was quite feeble in the Punjab, Sind and North-West Frontier Province. In between came Assam, Bengal, Orissa, Madras, Central Provinces and Delhi. The Princely States were also not untouched.

The Government came forward with the theory that the movement developed according to a preplanned Congress scheme. Though it published a detailed brochure on the subject, the Government failed to prove the charge. Underground Congress Socialists made a similar assertion, though they claimed for themselves the credit for preparing the plan according to which the people acted. The fact is that the masses acted spontaneously, spurred on by young Congress workers and students, even though they acted more or less according to a uniform pattern everywhere.

The first phase of this action—taking out of processions, shouting slogans in support of the Congress demand, and hoisting of the Congress flag on Government buildings—requires no explanation. For this had been the standard pattern of mass action in the national struggle. What was new and requires explanation is what happened in the next phase—attack on Government buildings and means of communication. The Congress had not officially asked the people to do so. Some persons thought of it on the spur of the moment, but the Government thought they were acting according to a plan prepared by the Congress. This was emphasized by the Government both in India and in Britain and widely publicised by the mass media. Thus ironical though it may appear it was the Government itself which made people believe that it was part of the Congress plan to attack Government buildings and

means of communications. Such attempts, therefore, spread from one part of the country to the other.

Apart from this new technique of struggle, another remarkable feature of the uprising of 1942 was the participation in it of various sections of the Indian people. While the university students undoubtedly took the lead, young people in the countryside also participated in it with great enthusiasm. Industrial workers were no less active, and production came to a standstill for several days in the leading industrial centres. Even more remarkable was the manifestation of symptoms of unrest among the subordinate sections of the Indian bureaucracy and the Indian police. Indeed, in several places they were found quite sympathetic to the movement, and in most places they did not show either promptness or ruthlessness in dealing with it, as they had invariably done in the past. The infection of hitherto immune sections was duly noted by the Government.

While the mass upsurge in August 1942 was spontaneous, the continued, albeit sporadic, attack on communications, formation of secret groups of revolutionaries in various parts of the country, and their actions in various fields were certainly the result of the efforts made by the underground leaders, who had formed a Central Directorate to provide guidance to the people. The most prominent among them was Jayaprakash Narayan, whose escape from prison along with five of his comrades became a source of great inspiration to the underground workers. He prepared a detailed plan of a secret organization and began the work of training armed fighters for freedom ; but his arrest within a year of his escape prevented him from achieving much by way of concrete results. The underground leaders who still eluded arrest became beset with controversies and dissensions, mainly centred round the desirability of the recourse to violent means. With Gandhi's release in 1944 and his call to the underground workers to come into the open and follow the path of non-violence, the underground resistance movement came to an end, though some resisters continued to remain underground till 1945.

Gandhi himself had not given up the struggle after his imprisonment. In the true spirit of a *satyagrahi* he continued his fight for truth single-handed in prison, although he felt

very much handicapped as a result of being isolated from his colleagues. In a class by themselves, his challenge to Linlithgow to either prove the charge of Congress responsibility for the disturbances, or to withdraw it, and his fast for twenty-one days at the age of seventy-three did much to sustain people's faith in the righteousness of their cause and in their ultimate victory.

After his release in 1944 on grounds of health, while the other leaders were still in prison, Gandhi found himself in a quandary. Both physically and mentally shattered, he found that the environment of 1942 had completely disappeared and there was no question of any struggle being possible in the changed circumstances. On the other hand, his repeated efforts to start a dialogue with the Government were disdainfully spurned. Though upset, he did not lower the flag and refused to either withdraw or disassociate himself from the Quit India resolution in utter disregard of the official suggestion that that was a necessary condition for the beginning of a dialogue.

In so doing Gandhi once again had correctly gauged the situation. He realized that the fire of suffering and sacrifice through which the people had passed in 1942 would not be in vain, and the Government would have to start the dialogue some day. And so it proved to be when, shortly after the surrender of Germany, the leaders of the Congress were released from prison and summoned to a conference with the Viceroy at Simla, thus beginning the process which led ultimately to the achievement of independence in 1947. There is no doubt that the Quit India movement had something to do with this development. For although it had failed to achieve its objective immediately and had in fact been successfully suppressed by the Government, it had shown to the latter the strength of Indian nationalism in a way in which nothing else had done in the past. The movement was not limited to any one part of India, but interspersed over the whole of the country; its intensity and depth varied from place to place. It represented the most serious challenge to British rule in India since the rebellion of 1857, and this was acknowledged by no less a person than the Viceroy himself. For the first time the Government realized that the Indian bureaucracy and police, the main bastions of its rule, were not as reliable as before, so far as

their role in keeping the Indian people under British rule was concerned. Thus cracks had appeared in the edifice of the empire, and even the foundation was shaken. The national awakening and the sense of solidarity and unity shown by the non-Congress political parties (except the Muslim League) in the post-1942 period constituted a warning to the Government, which it could not ignore for long.

The impact abroad was equally significant. The Chinese reaction showed that the independence of India was no longer a question of exclusive Indo-British concern. It was well on the way to emerging as a major issue of world politics. The Soviet Union, of course, maintained discreet silence ; but this was purely a temporary phase in Soviet foreign policy, caused by the compulsions of the war situation. Much, therefore, would hinge on the U.S. attitude towards the Indian problem after the war. The exaggerated expectations of the Congress leaders from the United States were, of course, not fulfilled, and the latter showed no inclination to pressurize Britain to accept the Congress demand immediately. But the attitude of the U.S. Government as well as the U.S. press left no doubt as to what they expected Britain to do after the end of the war. Above all, in Britain itself, although there was hardly any sympathy for the Quit India movement, enlightened opinion, even within the Conservative party, veered more and more to the view that the independence of India could not be long delayed after the war, whatever the justification for denying it so long as the war continued.

APPENDIX

Part

TABLE

*Statistics connected with Congress**31st Decem*

Category	Madras	Bombay	Bengal	U.P.	Punjab
1	2	3	4	5	6
A. Government Servants (Excluding those of the Central Government)					
(i) Police					
1. No. of occasions on which Police fired :	21	226	63	116	1
2. No. of Casualties inflicted—FATAL :	39	112	87	207	—
3. No. of Casualties inflicted—NON-FATAL :	86	406	149	458	—
4. No. of Casualties suffered—FATAL :	—	6	5	16	—
5. No. of Casualties suffered—NON-FATAL:	91	563	180	333	—
6. No. of defections from Police :	1	6	—	2	—
(ii) Other Government Servants					
7. No. of attacks on other Government servants—FATAL :	—	1	—	3	—
8. No. of attacks on other Government servants—NON-FATAL :	19	50	14	141	—
9. No. of defections from other Government services :	—	3	—	9	—

I

I

*disturbances for the period ending**ber 1943*

Bihar	C.P.	Assam	NWFP	Orissa	Sind	Delhi	Coorg	Total
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
96	42	4	1	9	—	22	—	601
166	45	15	3	69	—	20	—	763
508	181	19	13	111	—	10	—	1941
26	8	—	—	1	-	1	—	63
342	256	17	52	26	90	62	—	2012
205	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	216
4	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	10
87	39	—	—	13	—	1	—	364
4	—	—	5	—	—	—	1	22

B Damage to Property
(Excluding Central Government Property)

1. No. of Police Stations or Outposts etc., destroyed or severely damaged :	5	46	4	42	—
2. No. of other Government buildings destroyed or severely damaged :	50	318	95	45	.
3. No. of public buildings other than Government bldgs, e.g., Municipal, property, Schools, Hospital etc., destroyed or severely damaged :	57	152	58	37	4
4. No. of important private buildings destroyed or severely damaged :	11	38	29	3	5
5. Estimated loss to Government : Rs.	225192	845410	171876	363366	1000
6. Estimated loss to other parties : Rs.	916025	563581	55391	102778	105000

C. Cases of Sabotage

1. No. of Bomb Explosions :	17	447	51	60	—
2. No. of Bombs or Explosives discovered without damage :	35	738	106	157	1
3. No. of cases of sabotage to roads :	32	78	57	84	—
4. No. of cases in which collective fines imposed :	41	73	10	7	—
5. Amount of collective fines imposed : Rs	1034359	817950	605503	3176973	—
6. No. of sentences of whipping inflicted :	295	17	2	1252	—
7. No. of arrests made :	5859	24416	4818	16796	2501
8. No. of local authorities superseded under Defence Rule 38 B					
Otherwise :	27	19	11	7	—

Source : National Archives of India,

72	29	4	—	5	—	1	—	208
103	41	64	1	25	—	4	1	749
92	45	66	—	8	2	4	—	525
119	2	61	—	2	1	2	—	273
354720	424840	284582	200	46459	1904	15456	120	2735125
495231	167270	194847	—	33598	2932	37037 6	245	300727
8	10	10	1	—	50	—	10	664
218	18	9	1	—	13	11	12	1316
169	7	43	—	4	—	—	—	474
16	3	1	—	—	5	—	7	173
2660765	344 595	339487	—	27750	—	—	—	9007382
340	282	—	—	9	365	—	—	2562
16202	8753	2707	2339	2806	3689	90	860	91836
3	35	—	—	5	—	1	—	108

New Delhi, File No. 3/52/43 Poll. (I)

TABLE II
Statistics connected with Congress disturbances for the period ending
 31st December 1943

Sr. No.	Provinces	Mad- ras	Bom- bay	Ben- gal	U.P.	Pun- jab	Bihar	C.P.	Assam	NWFP	Coorg	Orissa	Sind	Delhi	Ajmer	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
<i>Use of Explosives</i>																
1.	Number of casual- ties caused to Government ser- vants—FATAL	5	—	12	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	17
2.	Number of casual- ties caused to Government ser- vants—NON-FATAL	95	3	9	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	115
3.	Number of casual- ties caused to the public (including those to bomb- makers etc. them- selves)—FATAL	18	1	9	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	33

4. Number of casual- ties caused to the public (including those to bomb- makers etc. them- selves)—NON- FATAL	11	142	5	23	—	3	4	2	2	—	11	—	5	—	208
5. Number of casual-a)— ties caused to (a) Women and (b) Children— FATAL (Out of b)4 those included in item (3) :	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
6. Number of casual-a)— ties caused to (a) Women and (b) Children— NON-FATAL b) 1 (Out of those in- cluded in item (4) :	12	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	15
	29	1	5	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	37

Source : National Archives of India, Home Political File No. 3/52/43.

TABLE III

Statement showing the number of persons detained during the year 1943

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	Septem-ber	Octo-ber	Novem-ber	Decem-ber
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. <i>Convictions under all laws in connection</i>												
(a) With Congress movement month ending on 15th	2870	3337	2485	2163	1732	1091	803	603	544	284	414	438
(b) Progressive total upto 15th of the month	29681	32812	34895	35731	38764	44267	45295	46289	47458	47524	47807	48204
(c) Undergoing imprisonment on 1st of the month	18809	22725	3071	22781	23286	22548	18453	20506	19284	16498	15763	15163
2. <i>Detentions under Rule 26</i>												
(a) for month ending on 1st	1388	748	735	1259	817	414	148	282	139	114	102	67

(b) Progressive total upto 15th of the month	10223	10933	11623	12841	13683	12110	16096	16598	17229	17312	17415	17482
(c) Undergoing detention on 1st of the month (including those detained under Rule 129)	11674	12324	12300	12823	12704	9941	8759	9119	8081	7928	7267	5570

Source : National Archives of India, Home Political File No. 18/14/43.

TABLE

*Statement connected with the Congress**31st Decem*

Sr. No.	Provinces	Madras	Bombay	Bengal	U.P.	Punjab
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	No. of courts set up under the Special Criminal Courts Ordinance :	53	21	149	269	—
2.	No. of cases disposed of by these courts :	183	49	856	4658	—
3.	No. of persons convicted by such courts :	897	206	1623	10146	—
4.	No. of cases disposed of by ordinary courts:	1682	4199	506	1609	542
5.	No. of cases disposed of by military courts :	—	—	—	—	—
6.	No. of persons convicted by ordinary courts :	3202	9005	625	2833	903
7.	No. of persons convicted by military courts :	—	—	—	—	—
8.	Total number of death sentences imposed :	2	—	—	—	—
9.	No. of death sentences confirmed :	2	—	—	—	—

Source : National Archives of India,

IV

disturbances for the period ending

ber 1943

Bihar	C.P.	Assam	NWFP	Orissa	Sind	Coorg	Delhi	Ajmer Merwara	Total
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
138	141	—	—	9	1	—	10	—	797
2821	1590	133	—	230	2	—	168	—	10690
8423	3737	125	—	684	9	—	552	—	26402
1445	477	949	1508	723	291	36	20	—	14987
—	—	—	—	—	82	—	—	—	82
1821	692	1643	1643	1037	851	42	28	33	23358
—	—	—	—	—	313	—	—	—	313
19	36	4	—	1	2	—	3	—	67
10	26	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	41

Home Political File No. 3/52/43.

PART II

STATISTICS CONNECTED WITH THE CONGRESS
DISTURBANCES FOR THE PERIOD ENDING
31ST DECEMBER 1943

Central Departments

A. Railway :

1.	Number of attacks on employees—FATAL :	8
2.	Number of attacks on employees—NON-FATAL :	43
3.	Number of passengers killed in accidents whose cause was connected with the movement :	43
4.	Number of passengers injured in accidents whose cause was connected with the movement :	213
5.	Number of Railway Stations destroyed or severely damaged :	332
6.	Number of cases of serious damage to tracks since 1st October 1942 : **	411
7.	Number of cases of serious damage to rolling stock :	268
8.	Number of derailments or other accidents resulting from sabotage :	66
9.	Estimated loss to Railway property :	Rs. 52,00,000
10.	Number of defections in Railway servants : (Not known but believed to be nil.)	

** “Damage to track” was so widespread before 1st October 1942 and varied so greatly in extent, that it is impossible to give detailed figures. The cost of such damage was, however, approximately Rs. 9 lakhs, compared to which the damage done in the cases recorded since 1st October 1942 is almost negligible.

Source : National Archives of India, Home Political File No. 3/52/43.

B. P. and T. Department :

1. Number of attacks on employees— FATAL :	—
2. Number of attacks on employees—NON- FATAL :	258
3. Number of P. and T. offices, sub-offices, etc., destroyed or severely damaged :	945
4. Number of cases of destruction or serious damage to other property (telegraphs and telephones) :	12,286
5. Estimated loss to P. and T. property :	Rs. 3,37,561
6. Number of defections in P. and T. servants :	11

C. Other Central Departments

1. Number of attacks on employees— FATAL :	
2. Number of attacks on employees—NON- FATAL :	26
3. Number of cases of destruction or severe damage to Government property :	41
4. Estimated loss to Government property :	Rs. 1,27,456
5. Number of defections in Government servants :	2

D. *Military*

1. Number of occasions on which military fired :	68
2. Number of casualties inflicted—FATAL:	297
3. Number of casualties inflicted—NON-FATAL :	238
4. Number of casualties suffered—FATAL :	14
5. Number of casualties suffered—NON-FATAL :	70
6. Number of defections from personnel :	13
7. Number of cases in which military property or installations were destroyed or severely damaged :	35
8. Estimated loss :	Rs. 20,610
9. Number of occasions of firing from air :	5

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